Ways to Self-Realization

A Modern Evaluation of Occultism and Spiritual Paths

Mouni Sadhu

Mouni Sadhu, '*as the nom de plume of* '***Mieczyslaw Demetriusz Sudowski'***, was an author of spiritual, mystical & esoteric subjects. He finally came to his supreme Master & Guru, **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi** who finding him well equipped with the necessary qualifications, *granted him His Grace*, *eradicated his ego-sense* (*as reported by the author himself*) & finally *helped and guided him to discover his own eternal and ever-abiding Self*.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi **Mouni Sadhu**

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by Mouni Sadhu

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FOREWORD

People often think that occultism, mysticism, and the inherent paths of discipleship are nebulous rather than something definite. Likewise, those who choose such paths are regarded as unrealistic, living in what is termed a daydream.

All these misconceptions are only further proof that the subject is far from being properly understood by laymen; but that is only natural and almost unavoidable.

In order to be in a position to make any comparisons and judgments, we ourselves must be on the highest or at least on an equal level of knowledge. And this is still not enough: we have to be experts in the realm we want to explore.

Practically speaking, what does this mean? Nothing less than that the one who is on the Path must do the work himself. Usually such a person is not interested in interfering with or criticizing his brothers, but laymen are eager, sometimes at least, to do just those things, and lacking the necessary wisdom are simply incompetent.

So what we can grasp about the spiritual or occult paths must necessarily come from adepts themselves, that is disciples or pupils of a true Master. They alone can speak about the path they tread.

Occultism is neither a synonymous term nor a substitute for spirituality, and spiritual men do not necessarily come from the ranks of occultists. They are two different things.

The first term, occultism, calls for the supremacy of the invisible to transcend the narrow framework of the physical manifestation of mat-

ter. But efforts of an occultist still revolve round his personal (that is egoistic) gains, even if they belong to planes of being more subtle than the physical. He still lives, dies, and reincarnates.

The second term, spirituality, transcends this world of illusion, and for a spiritual man the pronoun I becomes identical with the consciousness of the Whole. There is no birth nor death for the fully spiritualized being.

So on humanity's present level of development some still strive for occult paths, while others go beyond to the ultimate aim. Some persons are attracted to a deep penetration into the manifestation in time and space, in the form of its different aspects, that is the manifold combinations of matter in differently constructed worlds. But others are ripe enough to see the true goal and not to be enchanted by things which pass like shadows.

Both types of men act according to their development. Among occultists there are positive (or good, as we like to say) as well as negative (or evil) ones, depending on the lesser or greater degree of ignorance predominating in them. They can still err on their paths.

Those who are traveling on a straight way through the realization of the unique immaterial Truth of Being are beyond the dangers of erring, for they can no longer create negative forces. Saintship is the beginning of such a path of renunciation and wisdom.

In this book I have presented material as seen from the point of view of both types of men, trying to touch on the most interesting and frequently occurring problems.

The occultist who seeks to find answers to everything by means of mental understanding may find some assistance on this path in the following chapters. On the other hand, spiritually minded persons may discover confirmation of their own inner longings, when they read about the reality and possibility of the Ultimate Realization and about the necessary steps toward it.

It is in this hope that I have collected here a number of essays that have been partly published during the past seven years, rounding them out with some new chapters especially written for the purpose of the present book.

Throughout the work, the term Path will often refer to the Direct Path as shown by the great Indian Rishi or Seer, Sri Ramana Maharshi. Apart from this the reader will also find enough material to explain the

different occult teachings and traditions that touch on or have connection with the Path. This has been done because experience teaches us that some minds often need to know particulars before they are able to pass on to the great inner synthesis, which extends far beyond the mind.

This our epoch in human history is one of an intense and often violent search for solution of the pressing problems of our inner and outer life, and for new, wider conceptions and forms of that life. All this can be realized only by our own efforts.

Humanity is composed of single units, men. The more these components are enlightened and advanced, the higher is the level of the whole human race, and with it comes a better collective *karma* or destiny for the planet, which cannot be changed in any artificial way.

To conclude, I cannot but recall the immortal aphorism of Sankaracharya, which says that the impure and undisciplined mind is bondage, but when purified and dominated it becomes a liberator of man.

The techniques necessary for such a transformation of mind have been expounded in my previous book, *Concentration*.

PART ONE

Chapters I-XIII

Dedicated to the memory of
William Walker Atkinson
(Yogi Ramacharaka)

I

An Unsolved Problem

There are two kinds of people on the earth. The first kind pass through life without any or very little thought about the reason for their existence.

The patterns of such lives are more or less identical. They lead an instinctive life, rejoicing in the pleasures and suffering over the setbacks and difficulties. Their aim is to obtain the former and avoid the latter. Their origin and their goal are for them covered in stygian darkness, but the very cause of that darkness is rooted in the fact that they do not seek light. They have no time for such endeavors. Their nature cannot be changed immediately. For them are the numerous institutions that attempt to teach what sins to avoid in order to escape suffering. Also, there are the philosophical systems expounding what was only theoretical truth for their founders. At the same time, we cannot but recognize that such persons often do really good service for humanity.

It is also true that on the material plane of living we have reached peaks of ingenuity about which our grandfathers could not even dream. In an instant we can hear from all over the whole world. We can see almost instantaneously what is happening on the other side of the earth. We can fly through the air and explore the depths of the ocean. Once incurable diseases are now curable and modern surgical operations would have been miracles to our grandparents. We are justifiably proud of our social institutions and our inventions.

On the other side of the ledger, we have invented means of mass extermination undreamed of by Genghis Khan, Caesar, or Napoleon, and so on. The slavery of individuals, accepted by the Ancients, we have brought to a perfection unknown to them; millions of our fellow men have been put into concentration camps of such horror and destruction that the chances of survival were nil. The knowledge of torture has kept pace with our highly developed sciences of medicine and psychology. During the so-called bloody wars of Napoleon and Bismarck, nobody thought of torturing or killing prisoners or persecuting their families. War was limited almost to the battlefield and when it was over, prisoners were permitted to go back to their countries.

Travel was unrestricted before the advent of radio and the atom bomb. Surely men were not less happy then than we are today. So the advance of civilization is not always to the benefit of mankind. And the future?

To read some of the articles in modern periodicals by thoughtful authors is sufficient evidence of the worries tormenting them. We have not yet found the solution of social life which, from time immemorial, has been solved by the ants and bees.

However, there is another type of human being. They are few in number but their influence is great. Of all the millions of Britons living at the same time, it was given to Newton alone to conceive and propound the fundamental laws of our present-day physics. Only he was equal to such a task.

It was Christ alone who revolutionized the ethics of the ancient world, not the Jews or their conquerors, the Romans.

So the masses are not always right. Progress is maintained by the fearless and clear-thinking few. The others follow later.

To some men, the question of human existence and its problems is of the greatest importance. They want to know the causes of suffering and wherein lies true happiness. They know that it is not sufficient just mentally to understand the words of the Great Teachers of humanity; the scriptures and evangels of these leaders are like food put before a hungry man. They must become a part of his being if they are to satisfy his hunger. To read of the fascinating country of the Amazon River is not the same as exploring it for oneself. Experience is always the source of all wisdom.

If we ask the average man who he is, we get many different answers, but most of them are lacking in philosophy, logic, or both. Maybe later

we shall unearth a hidden fundamental truth. The average intelligent individual would say: "I am made up of body, mind, and soul," and so on. In other words, he would agree that he possesses a body, mind, and soul.

But WHO is this that possesses all these parts? We can expect no satisfactory answer from the average man for he does not know, and the answer to this question is the only thing that counts.

When a hungry man stands before a table laden with food, he MUST eat the food if he wishes to live, and not just think about its nutritive qualities. Otherwise he will die.

Similarly, every teaching must be put into practice. Recognizing its truth in theory will not help us.

Life with all its attributes will forever be an unsolved problem to the man who cannot realize to WHOM belongs what we call life.

The science of mathematics implies a mathematician, otherwise the formulas and equations would be meaningless. So is life, unless the source of life is known. There is a cardinal difference between action and he who is *witness* of it. What meaning has a picture without a seer? Life passes before our eyes like a moving picture. Does the seer cease to exist when the picture is over?

These are only similies, but they give rise to a conception difficult to convey otherwise. Their meaning is: "the true Self is the consciousness of the seer of the picture."

Of what use is it to describe the taste of a new fruit? The words soul, Spirit, and God are used with so many different and ignorant meanings that they are almost useless to convey the true conception of the above-mentioned expression. Our minds have a strange and harmful faculty of replacing experience by definitions. You may think of water or pronounce the very word as long as you wish, but that will not quench your thirst.

Therefore it is clear why dogmas and creeds imposed on us from without cannot give us anything as satisfactory as an experience of Truth. The immaterial permanent principle that we call the true or real Self of man has no affinity with the conceptions of the mind. For example, we cannot paint a picture with musical notes instead of paints, as they are not the right medium. Our mind gathers its experiences from earthly things limited in time and space.

Its language is inadequate to express what it does not know and cannot experience. Nevertheless, the immanent Truth has its reflections

everywhere, even as the great life-giving sun has its reflections in a pool or jar of water. The danger of using the mind as a guide to the knowledge of our true Self lies in the fact that we are liable to mistake the reflection for the subject itself, and find ourselves still no nearer the end of our search.

The mind is a tool and a means, but not the goal. We are not mind. We know we can cultivate our minds and make them more useful tools, reflecting more and more subtle and complicated thought. How can something that is under a higher control be the true Self?

The mind can reflect the Truth but cannot experience it. So in our search for the true Self, the mind is only an instrument to put us on the way, if the unsolved problem of our being is ever to be solved.

And the very urge in us, to search for that solution, is nothing else but the voice of our forgotten true Self.

If it were not tragic, it would really be funny to see how, in our time, the so-called sciences lead humanity to its own annihilation, together with all the discoveries that it cannot properly use.

On the other hand, some discoveries in medical science have reached a degree of considerable effectiveness. But here comes the blow: instead of conquering all disease, new and more terrible ones appear, against which medical science feels itself helpless.

The initiated disciple of a true Master knows that this is only natural: the mere fact of finding new means for combating physical suffering is not conclusive. As long as men still have to pay their debts in the form of sufferings, the advancement of any science would not put it in a position to eradicate those sufferings. The root cause that generates them must be found.

The solution is very simple, but by no means an easy one. If all men would cease to inflict suffering in all its forms on their neighbors, and on every other form of life round them, then their own suffering would disappear in due time, after the past had been paid in full.

We laugh when we hear of persons who refuse to harm any living being, even an insect, but we feel far from laughing when we get a fatal disease transmitted to us by an insect that we were unable to kill soon enough. Against all such accidents we are virtually helpless.

II

Two Principles in Man

Creeds in themselves are inadequate to lead us to our first and ultimate aim, the knowledge of our true Self; but that does not mean that they are altogether useless. To go to any distant place, we have to make use of a definite route. All routes lead somewhere, but in order to reach a specific place we have to travel by the most appropriate path. Not only must we choose the proper way but we must take the necessary steps to get there. The perusal of guidebooks will not bring us to our destination unless we do what is necessary. All religions, for example, are such roads on what is truly a pilgrimage. The makers of these roads knew the Truth. They also knew the limited conditions of humanity as a whole. Their labor and pain prepared the way for us.

How mankind can get lost even on the well-defined roads can easily be seen. This very thought should keep us humble, but strangely it does not.

Very often made roads are not the shortest way to a given destination. There are paths that cut across; moreover, the roads do not always necessarily lead one to the very peak of a high mountain. They usually stop at a certain level and then the traveler must continue on foot, alone but for the guide. At certain places on the ascent, the traveler gains a view of the plains and the route by which he came.

Every religion teaches us to do good and avoid evil, that is, to create good causes, which will in turn bring more propitious conditions for our future lives. This has to do with material conditions, which are temporary and subject to change. Perfection has no limitations nor is it temporary or changeable. Pleasure and suffering are conditions of material existence. To rise out of them, man has to seek perfection: the permanent, the unchangeable. Few are those seekers, but that does not mean that they are wrong or deluded. Theirs is the true sanity.

Such a seeker discovers in due course that there are two principles in himself, a temporary conditioned one and the perfect, unconditioned, and eternal. What choice has he?

Every human being has an innate desire for happiness but that desire changes with the degree of his understanding. The average person wants pleasure irrespective of its consequences and its impermanence. He does not know what lies before him. He snatches at every opportunity of pleasure. If it is connected with the suffering of others, as often happens, then it is itself the cause of his own suffering. The vicious circle has no end.

He who recognizes the unchanging principle in himself strives after a different kind of happiness. He seeks it above and beyond the temporary and limited world. He knows that every material benefit that can come to him is as a hailstone in his hand. His illusions of pleasure are dispelled.

In his actions, he always puts the question to himself: "Am I doing this for reality or illusion?" This scrutiny of his motives is his safeguard against error. He seeks not to create causes of suffering, and is therefore free of pain himself. In that freedom lies the happiness unattainable the other way. Only one who has experienced it can realize this supreme "joy of living," which goes beyond the grave and rebirth.

The eternal principle in man is exclusive of evil, for evil arises only from the conviction that man is the body, separate from others, and the body demands more and more the satisfaction of its desires, irrespective of whether or not wrong is done to others in the process. The limited and conditioned ego-body wants possessions. So do other egos. Thence proceeds the struggle for so-called existence with all its disastrous consequences.

The realization that man's true being is not the shell he inhabits puts an end to his troubles. His body is then not the most important thing and what happens to it is relatively unimportant. His consciousness has been transferred to a plane where troubles do not exist.

If mankind only realized how simple is the case! He who has accepted this standard of values is not then greatly upset by adversity or loss of material things. If his body is damaged, sick, or wounded, why worry too much about that? Its inevitable end is destruction when he has finished with it.

Sometimes people mentally accept this attitude as logical and true,

but not having successfully made the transfer of consciousness beyond their ego-body life, still receive shocks and undergo troubles in the material world. This may lead to serious doubts, but the cause lies in their own nonattainment. They expect an immediate state of bliss before they realize the true Self in full. This is not logical, for true attainment (or the Realization of the Self) means a complete transfer of consciousness into the realm of the Self where there are no troubles. For then the life of the ego-body becomes as unreal, as dreamy, as is the state of sleep for an ordinary man. Then the fate of the ego-personality is unimportant and does not affect the inner consciousness, being the state of happiness without limitations.

If I find my environment unpleasant, I simply change it, but before I leave the old one, I should find a new and more suitable place to go. If I do not, I will find myself stranded, perhaps worse off than before. So in order to leave all my troubles, I should secure the new level of consciousness which lies beyond them.

Innumerable ties bind man to his perishable principle, catching him in a thousand ways and preventing him from leaving their illusions. All conditioned life is the enemy of Realization of the true Self. It serves no purpose to enumerate these ties for their name is legion. The difficulty is by no means insurmountable. There is a wonderful law that cuts through the Gordian knot, dissolving all ties and illusions immediately that man realizes *who he is*.

Before he attains this state of Being, the hints given about the particularities of his obstacles have little chance of being understood and are more likely to raise doubts and sorrows. The surest way is to follow the Path of Realization of our own unconditioned permanent principle. If I know *who I am*, everything else is clear: if not, there is darkness and uncertainty.

In the innermost recesses of every human being is hidden infinite peace and bliss. If you gaze on the surface of still water you will see your reflection. So the Self, which is inexplicable in words, is reflected in its purity only through the stillness of the mind.

Troubled water reflects a distorted image or none at all. Stillness and peace of the mind are the conditions necessary for the revealing of the Inner Self.

The process of this great revelation must be natural and unforced. There is an ancient saying that although the Lord is omnipotent, there

is one thing He cannot do, namely, to give salvation to a sinner against his will. It is not a paradox but the operation of natural law. The anthropomorphic conception of the Most High does not reveal this law. In later chapters, a more logical and realistic conception of God will reveal why our own effort is a deciding factor on the way to Realization.

Discrimination of the two principles in man is not an easy or quick development. At certain stages it is impossible. We are ourselves the best judges of our own preparedness. If the temporary principle is more important to us and our efforts to know the Changeless One are weak and spasmodic, not coming from our innermost Being, it may be a sign that they are as yet premature. For the present then, the use of the high roads is best.

For the Path of Realization needs the whole man, and there is no compromise. There are signs, though, that there is a need for this knowledge to be made available to greater numbers. Throughout the world there are many groups of people studying the inquiry of the true Self. There are many different names for such groups. There are also spiritual Masters who attained the fulness of Realization and lived in our time among us, to help those who wished to take decisive steps along the evolutionary path. One of the greatest and best known Sages and Masters was Sri Ramana Maharshi, who left this world in 1950. The well known Yogi, Sri Yogananda, died in the United States in 1952. Their teachings are similar, Maharshi being a spiritual Master of the highest order, known in India as the Great Rishi. Yogananda humbly sat at the feet of the Maharshi before he went to the West. And before his death he again visited the Rishi. Yogananda was a Yogi, whose service was to a certain section of humanity.

The Great Rishi spoke with authority and immense spiritual power, attracting to his abode—almost buried in the jungle—scores of disciples from all over the world. But, at the same time, no spiritual Teacher before Maharshi had expressed the Ultimate Truth of all Being in such a simple and clear form. According to his teaching, the Truth is simplicity itself.

Small wonder then, that the One who realized the Truth and identified himself with it (the two processes being indivisible), could speak so clearly of the above-mentioned attribute of the Truth.

III

The Book of the Hidden Dwelling

The least known and most mysterious thing to man is his Being. Orthodox psychology is occupied with the obvious thoughts and emotions of man, but his very essence, that is, the "I" to whom these experiences happen, remains beyond his reach.

Nevertheless, man, from times before recorded history, has tried to fathom the mystery of his life and death. These efforts are plainly traced in the life of ancient Egypt, thousands of years before our era. The philosophical thought of India also reaches that remote period. Therefore we must recognize the fact that knowledge of the human soul has not advanced a great deal since that time. The immortal discourses of Socrates and Plato and the works of Aristotle remain peaks of elevated thought. Have we any greater thinkers in modern times than they?

In ancient Egypt, thousands of years before Greek philosophy flourished, there was a strange book secreted in subterranean temples and accessible only to the most highly initiated priests. According to tradition, it was called *The Book of the Hidden Dwelling.*

In this book, under a triple veil of symbols, was expressed the most mystical doctrine of the changeless, eternal principle in man that is now called the true Self.

The ancient expression, dwelling, conveys another idea. When we try to analyze ourselves, we find our inner urge impels us to seek, almost unconsciously, our eternal home where sorrow, disappointment, and strife have no access.

When a man has been very close to death, but has been rescued at the last moment, we are told that just when the body gives up its struggle for life, a beam of infinite peace emerges as from an invisible sun: he

has a mysterious, illuminated understanding of all his past and all that lies ahead. He is on the threshold of the hidden dwelling.

Now, the once secret doctrine is spoken of openly. Great Sages of modern times have made it the keynote of their teachings.

At the present time, more and more persons are striving to enter the unconscious (or unknown) realm of their own true Being hidden beneath the perishable physical body. Can all these seekers be deluded? Is the realm of everlasting peace only a dream? Everyone must find out for himself. The peace that another has found is not conclusive evidence for oneself. Only individual experience can establish conviction.

Fortunately for us, there are always on this earthly plane those who have found this experience, and can speak in absolute certainty of the Eternal Dwelling. If it were not so, how could erring mankind find the way to the realization of this truth? In the higher school of Wisdom, there are the same rules as in our mundane schools. A teacher is necessary to expound the knowledge of textbooks. What advantage is there for a classroom full of students without a lecturer?

It is the same in the school we call "life"; there are Teachers who can tell us the way to our hidden Eternal Dwelling in which alone the wanderer shall find his everlasting rest.

Few indeed are the Masters who know the Path to it, and few also are those who seek, but "he that seeketh, findeth."

The hidden dwelling is far beyond the forms of existence we know as our everyday experience. Our consciousness operates on three planes:

1. That of the five physical senses.
2. The emotional plane.
3. The mental plane.

In each there is pleasure and suffering. The pleasures pass quickly but the suffering slowly, leading us eventually to the final martyrdom of physical death. Thus the three planes are within the reach of suffering, so our realm of peace cannot be in these. He who reads these lines will probably not be able to do so fifty years hence. For him, the search while in this body will be over.

If we wish to attain that plane where suffering is unknown, we must discard or transcend all these tainted levels, for their very texture is pain and pleasure. To reach the hidden dwelling, we must raise our consciousness to the plane above the senses, above thought, and beyond emotion. We must come to experience a new kind of life. This is not

the earthly life as we have known it, but the life of Spirit. It is beyond the reach of pain or pleasure. It is bliss.

IV

What Is Spirituality in Man?

There are few words whose meaning has been so misunderstood and twisted as that of spirituality. As always in such cases, there is some justification for this: too small a number of men have had genuine spiritual experiences. In spite of this, many persons believe that they are entitled to speak and often write about spirituality, although perhaps they know less about it than does the average lawyer of the complex processes in the human marrow. The cause is not hard to discover. If you speak or write inconsistently about matters well known to official science, recognized specialists will immediately raise their voices to condemn the ignorance of a layman.

With true spirituality it is different, for there are no such things as definite and officially recognized standards of spiritual experience, apart from the numerous misty theories and descriptions given by individuals who believe that they know the subject and have had genuine experiences in it. If, for example, I were to state that an atom of hydrogen is heavier than one of oxygen, I would surely be branded as ignorant. But if someone tells us about "spiritual love" among certain film stars and young couples, it will pass without much comment or protest. Those who have attained the spiritual consciousness in its fulness (*Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, that is, perennial, formless *Samadhi*), and are as familiar with it as is a good mechanic with different types of internal combustion engines, are all too rare and too silent. Perhaps there are good reasons for such an attitude. How much use would there be in a skilled surgeon trying to explain the delicate mechanism of the heart's valves to a butcher?

Now let us see what can be said, in simple words, about the theme of

this chapter, according to the teachings of those who have reached the peaks of human evolution. We call them Masters of Wisdom or Perfect Men.

Just as the waking state succeeds that of dreams and makes them unreal, so spirituality in man unveils for him the mayavic nature of this "manifested" (that is, only for our five physical senses), visible, and sentient universe. This statement is axiomatic and from it will be drawn all further conclusions. Man's first care should be for his Self, no matter how much or how little his contact with it is developed. For from the Self that man believes to be himself stem all his deeds, emotions, and thoughts. This point should be well understood before we proceed. Some examples may be more enlightening. One kind of self in man marries a shapely young woman, while a totally different one (that of a true Saint or Yogi) strives after the purity of *brahmacharya* (renunciation of sensuality). One characteristic in man compels him to amass fortunes as do American millionaires, gamble on races and on every kind of game of chance, and even to steal. Such acts belong to the innate love of physical pleasures and comforts and the power that goes with great wealth. But in sharp contrast are other human beings, such as certain Saints, who have spent their lives in rough garments or a loincloth only, as do some true Yogis, and who never even have held money in their hands, much less engaged in the pursuit of earthly goods and pleasures. We can think of many pairs of opposites such as: good will and maliciousness; restlessness and peace; honesty and fraud, and so on. Individuals act differently and strive after different aims. These facts firmly established for us, we can proceed further.

Spirituality means the search for Reality, that is, for something which is endless, supreme, unchangeable, spotless, beyond all relativity, and simply the Absolute itself. Under this term is recognized that which never ceases to exist, which is formless—for all forms are perishable—and therefore indestructible and independent of everything.

The basis of experimental spirituality, which alone counts, is the finding of the Truth within ourselves, that is, just that "something," eternal and independent of all known states, such as the physical or waking state of consciousness and those still usually unknown conditions of our awareness, the astral and mental planes and others described by occult-

ists. The state called death that comes after the destruction of the physical body and its five senses also belongs to these unknown conditions. It would be unwise to say that such a search is easy or within reach of everyone, as the task is a truly great one.

Analyzing the idea of spirituality, we feel compelled to recognize the existence of many minor but unavoidable conceptions. For example, we can say that fanatical believers in certain creeds cannot be spiritualized for they are evidently unable to live and contemplate without forms, no matter how exalted these may appear to them. All pursuit of worldly things only betrays the materialistic self (ego) in man, even if he claims that his wealth and possessions may be used for the good of others. By such a statement, he shows his firm belief that those others are as materialistic as he himself, for he judges all by his own measure. Compare Christ's words: "Man cannot live by bread alone."

Spirituality is a clear and uncompromising preference of spiritual values and experiences to anything else. This is also one of the infallible tests whereby we can recognize whether a man is actually engaged in a search for Truth and attainment, or merely a lip-adept, deceiving us and possibly himself. If a man talks about Reality, Spirit, and attainment, and at the same time is unable to free himself from such useless but harmful habits as drinking, gambling, sensuality, greed, and so on, which he knows to be alien to his professed aim, then he is only "talking" of things, which in fact are quite foreign to him.

The essence and desires of a man's nature are clearly revealed when, instead of spiritual meditations, discussions, and meetings he prefers theaters, sport, and other forms of entertainment.

Spirituality is a quality not common to what we like to call "average" or "normal" men and women, for it cannot sink to the usual low level of human egos, and inwardly immature individuals cannot possibly raise themselves to it. They need time for the rejection of the different forms of illusion that have been growing in them during former births.

If a man is ambitious, impatient, and ego-centered, he is far from any attainment, because then his life is only a negation of spirituality. How could it be otherwise?

Some persons confuse spirituality with spiritualism or the so-called evocation of spirits at seances with (or without) mediums, that is, subnormal beings in whom the usually inseparable subtle matter of the

physical body and its invisible counterpart (also known as astral or etheric body) is easily dominated by the inferior forms of consciousness, which pretend to be what they are not.

These unhealthy experiments based on curiosity and often on ambition contain plenty of fraud and could never interest a truly spiritual man. This fact calls for full understanding, for blind acceptance of such things implies self-deception and weakness.

All striving after any kind of visions automatically excludes every possibility of a sincere spiritual search and progress. For this sort of thing is only a subtle variation of the gross physical senses, and is dictated by the relentless, unsteady, untamed, and vibration-thirsty human mind. "You cannot destroy your illusions by creating others in their place." (From the sayings of Buddha.)

Every worldly activity that is full of passion and attachment is also a proof of the absence of any spiritual attainment in a man. Such things indicate that as yet the man has not found that inner certainty, and has been unable to establish within himself a Shrine of Silence: Wisdom. This failure is owing to his desire to change and arrange this *mayavic* (unreal) outer world after his own pattern, no matter how elevated this might appear to the dazzled but ignorant people around him. And all this is a strong proof of his own ignorance.

The Perfect Master knows that the true aims and imperishable perennial bliss to which every being (irrespective of whether human or not) is entitled, and to which all must eventually come, lies in the merging of the separate, imaginary unit into the ocean of the unique Superconsciousness, also called the Universal Self or Overself.

Therefore the wise man does not indulge any ignorance in himself or in those round him; but he will help every being desirous of stepping onto the Path of Liberation from the illusory separate existence, that existence called by Sri Ramana Maharshi the primordial sin.

A certain negation of the mundane "realities" and a degree of renunciation are also signs and conditions of true spirituality. The fact that the overwhelming majority of human beings are living totally different lives in no way disturbs a spiritual person. He is fully aware that this present epoch is but a spiritual dawn for the few who are early awakened. Therefore it is ridiculous to try to popularize and advertise spirituality, which comes to the individual only when the time is ripe.

One who has trod the Path and reached the goal knows that in his

own past he too was deaf and blind to the things of the superior life, which for him are now such a resplendent reality, bliss, hope, and might.

The true Master is never in a hurry to "convert" anyone, and even those who come to him in an apparently sincere search for Inner Truth are carefully handled and sometimes in a way incomprehensible to those round him. But he *knows*, while the others do not. And therein lies the whole difference.

The fact of spiritual aspiration in a man is already a kind of attainment; for such a one knows certain things, unknown to others. But the fact of reading the few deeply spiritual books still in existence and attending meetings at which related matters are allegedly discussed can still mean very little and often nothing of any real value.

When Great Teachers speak to us, emphasizing the necessity of resurrection, rebirth, enlightenment, and so on, we usually read or listen to their words while remaining what we are, people born of earth, who eventually return to earth.

St. John, that deeply initiated disciple of Christ, tells us: "That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit." Because the tremendous importance of this statement normally escapes our attention and appreciation, we can understand why so few reach even an approach to spiritual life. A religious man would simply quote the Gospels: "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is an axiomatic truth, but may not appear so to our intellect, which wants everything clearly explained.

Men often fail to make good use of certain very efficient techniques available to spiritual aspirants, simply because they do not grasp the inner meaning of these exercises that lead on to higher development. They would prefer to acquire unusual abilities by the use of such exercises in anticipation of what may happen to them when they reach the summit, Self-Realization. But such an attitude is as nonsensical as that of a boy who refuses to learn algebra on the grounds that he is unable to see how it will help to introduce him to higher mathematics in later years. So, an unsuccessful aspirant does the same. He gains no stamina in the unavoidable toil of the first steps, which appear uninteresting and boring to him, and so prevents the possibility of attainment in his present incarnation and nothing can help him against such an unreasonable attitude.

True spiritual attainment never advertises itself. For then a man

knows too much and his horizon is so vast that nothing like earthly honors, position, recognition, or veneration could possibly attract him for even a second. If it is otherwise, there cannot be any attainment.

In brief, spiritual attainment means experienced knowledge of the true Self of man. "If this is known there is nothing else to be known," says Sri Maharshi. No reasonable man would wear women's clothes and go shopping for cosmetics and other accessories intended for a person whom he is not.

Similarly, one who has realized that he is immaterial Consciousness or Spirit will not become entangled in business pertaining to his mortal shells or bodies. And this is the test by which we can gauge the actual spiritual content of a human being. Tragically few would be able to pass such a test. In the overwhelming majority of cases, we will find, beneath the assumed pseudo-spiritual veneer, earthly desires and strivings, carefully hidden from the world. How do we test such a person? Simply by placing him under temptation and then quietly observing the result. Gently offer him the means of propaganda for his "wisdom" and eminent position, in order that he can influence and "spiritualize" his surroundings; blame or glorify his actions, knowledge, attainment, and then carefully watch his reactions; ask his opinion about Great Masters, suggesting that he might be their equal or even greater, and so on.

The first sign of attainment is nonattachment (the Hindu *vairagya*). The above tests, when carefully and intelligently conducted, must clearly reveal with whom you are concerned, for the hidden strings of attachment are proofs of nonspirituality and cannot escape detection.

Here are two striking examples. At one time I was in doubt about the degree of true spirituality in a well-known Yogi, who has written a number of sensational books. Then in a letter to me, one of his followers quoted his "master" in speaking of some needs of his organization, as saying "No spiritual work is possible without dollars." And yet another "prophet and messiah" sells autographed copies of his books for high prices, ostensibly to finance future editions.

And then I knew who these men were.

But also, I saw a Man who, from the height of his final attainment, had no interest in such things and to whom glorification, condemnation, admiration, and wealth were certainly as unimportant for him as the lazy movements of the little gray lizards on the concrete wall behind the couch.

Then I recognized who was my true Master for ever. We can indefinitely multiply the examples, but there is no need of that, for if, at this moment, you have clearly grasped the idea itself, then the light of discrimination may come to you.

True spirituality excludes all fear or even anticipation of that which we call death, as it does not exist for a spiritually experienced man who knows that he is not his mortal shells (from the dense to the subtle, that is, the physical, astral, mental, etc.). He is always ready to leave all of them at any moment, and this fact brings him neither regret nor happiness, only indifference, in the same way as a bus or train passenger is unconcerned about the particulars of the vehicle since it is not his property.

All our vices and temptation are inseperably bound up with our physical body and its ancestor the ego-mind-personality. What vice would be possible from a nonmaterialistic and nonegoistic attitude? When all sins are analyzed, it will invariably be found that the ultimate cause, no matter how deeply hidden, lies with that unholy trinity, ego-mind-personality, being separated from the wholeness of Absolute True Being, and merely a veil, a *fata morgana* of unreality.

V

Word-Labels

When on the Path, the very aim for which one strives is the discovery within ourselves of an utterly unknown thing, not experienced before, called the true perennial Self-Consciousness, or briefly, the Self.

One of the greatest obstacles along the way is our innate mental habit of labeling. Our language is based on similies and comparisons concerning things already known.

If I say the word *leg*, for example, this really means a large number of objects, often apparently having nothing in common with each other. Compare a human leg with the leg of a spider, a crab, an elephant, a

chair, or a table. There is an idea common to all these different forms that links them together, giving them a common factor that justifies the name given, in spite of the different appearance.

But to what can we compare this immaterial thing, not yet experienced, which we consider to be our Self? There cannot be any comparison: therefore there cannot exist any suitable word or term.

The Self is nameless, for it is the All. Yet persons freely use such definitions as Spirit, Soul, Self, and adjectives derived from such words.

The human mind has a strange propensity; it likes to put a label or name on everything, even when the mind cannot properly realize what it is trying to define with a word.

When the label already exists, it may then substitute an unknown something, hidden behind it. Then we liberally use such a label, like a sealed bottle of wine, the very taste of which one may not yet know.

Such misuse of word-labels is an important obstacle on the Path for a beginner. A mature disciple such as his Master never allows himself to use the words Spirit, Spirituality, Self, Truth, God, and so on, without discrimination and direct experience, although such a person knows much more about them than a layman.

That is why the Maharshi so strongly emphasized the wisdom of the Silence.

He taught that silence is infinitely more eloquent than our own word-labels, and those fortunate ones who can understand his teaching and his incomparable initiation, through silence and stillness, know there is no better language to convey the inexpressible.

This Silence has nothing in common with emptiness or nothingness. It is the complete opposite of both those negative things. Also, it is not a stream of thoughts directed from one mind to another. The thoughts in this case are the same word-labels, not yet spoken.

Every thought is a result of the activity of the mind, which nevertheless is born from the basic Silence. And so every activity must end in the Silence. Realization of this fact means an initiation.

The inner Silence must be sought and found whatever the price or toil. This is a condition of every spiritual attainment.

A gradual and systematic purification through elimination of one vice after another is not practicable on the Direct Path. But it is a long way followed, consciously or more often unconsciously, through the experience of suffering, by the mass of humanity.

The initiated disciple knows that all evil and vice depend entirely on basic ignorance. This fatal ignorance is the substitution of the real Self in man, by the ephemeral ego, the source of all limitations and evil. From misdirected effort, there cannot come anything other than so-called evil, which in fact means suffering in one form or another.

The wisdom realized in the depths of human consciousness—that our real interest and supreme good do not lie in the ego, but in the Self—makes evil-doing as nonsensical as putting one's finger in a fire to gauge its temperature.

Therefore, the very source of evil cannot be reached before the Ultimate Wisdom is obtained. Theories and commandments accepted at any time, without any real knowledge of why they are true and suitable, give us little or nothing of permanent value. The first serious temptation destroys all theory and the man quickly falls into the abyss of the perishable life of the ego, that creator of all suffering.

VI

God and His Laws

The chief hindrance to a proper conception of the Supreme Manifested Being whom we call God lies in the limitations of our minds.

Philosophies created by the minds of men on this planet are not the only ones in the infinite universe, nor are they the most advanced. The present evolution of the average man allows for only two kinds of mental states, subjective and objective. We do not know any other.

In normal everyday life we have an I or ego-consciousness and you, nonego. This you is the counterpart of I but in another body. Because our minds are conditioned by separate forms of personalities (the old ego), they cannot imagine other states of being that transcend the limited dualism of subject and object, that is I and you. At this stage of development, our minds are egoistic and self-conscious. Everything else is apart from us. The I takes the form of ego and the non-I the form of the world.

We do not grasp the fact that both aspects are two sides of the same coin. Now we may be in a better position to understand what, in our consciousness, prevents us from getting a full conception of the Supreme. If He is separated from His creation, who then created this other part and from where? It is as if someone, having a clear consciousness of his being, that is his Self, were to separate part of himself, of this I, and from then on begin to call this part of himself, not Self. This is an absurdity; then will emerge the only other possibility, that the Creator and creation are one and have never been separated.

This does not mean that in every little stone on the pathway, every insect and every man, God is hidden in the whole of His infinite Being. The manifested creation is then seen as channels of the Absolute and is one consciousness and the conducting capacity of these channels is infinitely various. The consciousness of a stone may appear to us as a total absence of it, because of the stone's limitations. Who can deny that our own minds would appear to far more developed beings as deprived of or having very little consciousness, though we may not realize the fact.

All of this shows that the anthropomorphic conception, "I am here and God is there," is merely an absurdity and is the very obstacle barring our consciousness (our true Being) from being absorbed into the Whole, that is in God.

Now we can see why those who know have always pointed out that the ego is the cause of our ignorance and consequently, unhappiness. That which insists on being a separate entity is our worst enemy for it is the cause of our continued incarnations and deaths. That which seeks union with the Heart of Being is our true Self, the immortal and beginningless Consciousness. That is God, for there can be no other.

To those who like to limit themselves to a personal entity, God must necessarily appear as a person, and this is the beginning and source of the myth of a personal God. When a man has transcended his ego-consciousness, then his God also loses the anthropomorphic and conditioned aspect. Then there begins to dawn in his consciousness the larger conception of the Absolute Being present everywhere and being everything.

These last two expressions are not strictly appropriate, but where can we find, in our language of mental conceptions, anything adequately to convey what cannot be conveyed to the mind?

Because the Supreme cannot be other than the true Self of Being, discovering It means to discover and be God.

This is the union with God of which the saint knows. It is the union that is the true and sole aim of the genuine Yogis. This union must be experienced, not imagined. In the Catholic world, it is spoken of as the presence of God. The expression is not perfect, for God, even when not experienced by man, is forever omnipresent. Man's failure to recognize it does not alter the fact.

There is a question that is almost impossible to answer satisfactorily for the outer mind. "Why did the Infinite and Self-contented manifest Itself through the creation, the universe?" There is not and cannot be an answer on the level of the mind. It is hard to imagine that your blood cells have any knowledge of your thoughts and moods, but the Sages, the Rishis, as well as the great Saints know the answer. This forbidden inquiry does not exist on the level of consciousness above that of mind.

When the subject and object merge into absolute union, there are no doubts or questions. This supreme state is not a nebulous dream. It is accessible. It is nothing more nor less than the awakening from the dream of *Maya* (illusion) and when that happens, a strange experience ensues. Man, still apparently living in a body, does not belong to the visible world. That is what Jesus meant when he told His disciples to live in the world but not to be of that world.

So the solution of the above-stated query does exist, but cannot be conveyed in words, just as a cube cannot be placed in a square. The three-dimensional plane transcends that of two.

If men's minds were as scientific and logical in their approach to these questions as they are to their material problems, then they would arrive at the solution sooner.

We were considering the idea of God being the Whole, the sole source of manifestation of life and the universe. Such a conception implies movement, change, and all these changes must take place within the one Supreme Entity or Being. For what can there be apart from It? If so, then they must be balanced and counterbalanced, that is, no action can take place without a result or reaction. Nothing can be added to or taken from the Primary Unity.

Science has found this to be true not only in the material world but also in the invisible and intangible one.

This then, explains what is the reason for good and evil, for reward

and punishment: all are different aspects of the One, which alone IS.

Actions of any kind committed by separate entities must inevitably be balanced by others of similar structure in order that the Whole remains balanced in Itself. This is the law of manifested creation. When we act, the reaction is already created by the fact of our activity. Without action, there will be no reaction. While we wish to live in a manifested world of relativity, such a world is created for that purpose. If we want nothing beyond being forever merged in the Central Consciousness of the WHOLE, then we cannot be born and die any more. Both birth and death are then nonexistent for us.

So said Jesus to His intimate disciples. So also said Buddha, calling that state Nirvana.

So said the Great Indian Rishi or our own day, Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The above promise might be called the equation of Reality or Truth. It reflects the Law of Existence. All that we really need is to realize the Law.

It also lies in our power to disregard it and act without any thought of the Whole. In either case, a suitable reaction is inevitable.

If the driver of a car is afraid of excessive speed, the fear alone will not reduce the speed of the vehicle. He must take his foot off the accelerator, but the results of actions can be balanced not only by direct repercussions, called *karma* in the East, and destiny in the West: there are also other and more mysterious ways.

Otherwise, the world could never escape from the bewitched circle of action. As a strong man can help a weaker one and take his burden on his own shoulders, so advanced Beings do the same for us. In the world, we call this sacrifice and the example of the Christ is such.

Other Teachers have also done this, one even in our own time, but humanity has little knowledge of what has occurred.

What is the nature of these planned and deliberate actions on the part of these highly evolved Beings?

Only he who can realize what Their work implies can understand the answer, but we should know that behind every conscious sacrifice is part of a *balanced* action. We may call it redemption, the word does not matter. One thing is certain, such Redeemers have lost the consciousness of I and you. They are always the ONE.

To resolve the equation of I and you = ONE means to be one with the Redeemers, fulfilling the ultimate Law of Life.

There is nothing above and beyond this and it is possible, because you are under this Law, for you to become the Law.

To co-operate with the Law, you must know that there is no escape from it. It cannot be bribed. Adherence to any one creed, or belief, or theory will not suffice.

There is another question impossible to answer: "Why are things as they are?" Such a question can arise only because we do not clearly realize the transcendental conception of infinity and eternity. That which is limited cannot contain what is unlimited and beyond mental forms. God and creation, which is perhaps His thought-form, are such simply because they could be nothing else. Both are necessary as they are and nothing can change the fact.

According to the ancient Scriptures (the Books of Moses), God revealed His name to the Prophet at his request and said: "I AM THAT I AM."

Sri Ramana acknowledged this formula as the most perfect definition which the Infinite could convey about Himself. The Rishi told us: "In these few words, the Almighty gave up the secret of His very Name."

This revelation of the name of God can lead us to deep meditation, but the true meaning of the mystery can be revealed only in an adequate state of consciousness, when our awareness is beyond that of the mind. It is the state of *Samadhi*, the consciousness of the Whole.

VII

A Lamp in the Darkness

The Self is the unique and only possible perfection. If realized, it will of Itself remove all the ignorance and imperfections in man, just as a lamp dispels the darkness in a room where it is burning. Here lies the secret of the so-called instantaneous and irrevocable "conversions" and inner illuminations, well known in the past, as also in our own time.

Sri Maharshi compared these facts to gunpowder which ignites immediately a spark touches it.

A disciple of a real Master knows that all deliberations about what one may be, the gunpowder or the wet fuel, are really meaningless and cannot change things. You are what you are now, and your deeds, ways, and whole incarnation will proceed in accordance with the facts of realization mentioned above.

There is no such thing as chance or accident. From the point of view of the limited ego-mind such things apparently exist, but the ego-personality, based on the two fold illusion of the separate being cannot see any sequence in cause and effect. If this is so, and it is a fact, then a true disciple on the Path need never be anxious about anything.

The much discussed and mysterious ability to abide in the Infinite Self, which transcends one's personality, is almost impossible to convey in the language of our mind-brain, which can build only mental images based on what it already knows in embryo.

Man must visit another realm—beyond the capacity of his mind-brain—if he would know the immanent Real beyond the conditioned thinking.

Unfortunately we are not even masters of our outer mind. Everyone can have an experience of that here and now by trying to use his mind according to his own will. Attempt to think for, say, only three minutes without any distraction about a simple thing like the head of a pin. Next, eradicate all thoughts from your head for the same length of time. Then, if you are able to judge impartially and sincerely, you may see for yourself just how weak you are, and how you have not even conquered the realm of your mind-intellect, no matter how many degrees you may possess.

These degrees have been given to you by weaklings who are unable to dominate their own mental realm, the same as you yourself. It is only that at one time they stored away more mental ballast than you and acquired greater cleverness in using their relative knowledge.

VIII

Self-Analysis

Great intelligence is needed in the search for Truth, and only such intelligence will be interested in making such a search. The lack of it is often covered by use of excessive terminology, which only proves the fact that one is trying to hide this lack of personal experience with words heard or borrowed from other sources.

Such an attitude certainly leads nowhere. It is only a game of cat and mouse, in the same way as delving into the Scriptures and then abiding by their letter only. Such a state of mind is deplorable and its only fruit is hypocrisy.

"The blind leading the blind," a Great Teacher said two thousand years ago.

Self-analysis is a much better means. That which is able to do such impartial analysis cannot be the personality itself, just as a surgeon is different from the patient on whom he performs an operation.

So we see that the mysterious Self is actually not mysterious at all. It is in every one of us.

At the same time we also see that not everyone is in a position to perform an adequate self-analysis. That is the cause of the apparent spiritual darkness of these days. A disciple on the Path is not worried about this fact. He is not responsible for it and the real obligation is, in the first place, to himself.

Do not look at your neighbors' faults—first eradicate your own imperfections, is the meaning of a well-known saying of the Great Western Teacher. This is of an entirely practical nature. We try to better the world round us, forgetting that which is within our own reach—ourselves.

The best way to remove our doubts is to ask ourselves: To whom do all these things occur? If, in our inner answer, we avoid the meaningless

label Mr. or Mrs. Johnson, for example, knowing that these persons were christened that way—without their consent, merely because of their physical appearance on this planet at birth, and knowing also that this label will serve only a few dozen years, a mere nothingness compared with the immense periods of cosmic existence, known even to us—then some light may illumine our consciousness.

As a result of such deeper inner sight, it may be that we will renounce this false outer label and seek for something better, more scientific, logical and effective.

"Seek, and ye shall find."

IX

Oneness of Being

In our own era we find many books of so-styled Yoga, which often arouse much curiosity in the Western world. Some of them have been written by contemporary exponents of this science and are fairly appropriate for assimilation by a Western mind.

In one of them, received from a Yogi in the Himalayas who has his own school of disciples, I found innumerable precepts and commandments. Perhaps many of these are beyond moral or intellectual suspicion. They teach good in order to avoid evil and contain a fair amount of practical advice that could be useful to a student.

But the very fact of their multiplicity arouses doubt about the possibility of a beginner practicing all of them. If he tries only a few and finds the rest impossible to realize, he may be placed in a position that will prevent him from attainment. We cannot dissect or divide our living Being-Consciousness into separate parts, one of them being enlightened, while the other remains merged in darkness.

Being is indivisible.

The chief fact that the respected authors of such books forget is that they themselves can give and teach such manifold teachings *only after*

their own attainment is complete, not before. So this simply means that the disciple will be harassed and discouraged only by the very fact of the impossibility of all these instructions.

This discouragement means nothing else than failure in the search, hopelessly barring the Path.

The Great Sage, Sri Maharshi, knew human nature and its possibilities better than that. He gave us the hint that in everyone of us lies hidden all the necessary wisdom that we need for the attainment of the Truth. He also gave us the simple means by which we can awaken this inner wisdom. After we reach the goal, we ourselves can write scores of such books, as proof of this attainment. But they will be useful only for the authors themselves.

X

The Immutable Center

Sri Maharshi says that the great obstacle to attainment is the lack of a firm fulcrum in us, on which we can lean and from which we can start.

A circle is meaningless and impossible when we cannot locate its center. Moreover, there is no circle without a center.

The radius is a changeable quantity; only the center remains forever a constant element. This center is the knowledge of our own Being. This fact was always known by all the Great Masters of the past, whom posterity rightly reveres: Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Plotinus, who made, directly or indirectly, the search for this fulcrum, the keystone of their wisdom. "Man, know thyself and thou will know the world and the gods."

Therefore, Sri Maharshi never insisted on the necessity for any classical or yogic practices as a *sine qua non* of attainment. Indeed, he says, it is possible for everyone, independent of a person's position in the outer world.

Another Teacher expressing the same truth said: "Seek ye first the

kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Immediately after this He states: "The Kingdom of God is within you." So you can see from these words how the Teacher of our own time corroborates the words pronounced so long ago. Moreover, he says, "No true Master ever contradicts another; there is only one Truth."

This inner search for the Path will be fully recognized in the future. Now only a few can follow it. For it is the Ultimate Truth, the most elevated and unattached conception that a human being can yet bear to realize.

Teachings and theories may be built round it, but for a practical search that will lead to success, only the center or the unquestionable and unavoidable fulcrum will do.

There is and can be no substitute.

XI

The Consciousness of the Future

There is always a small minority among men who are very different from their brethren. They are not concerned with the usual ways of life, having other aims to pursue. If they speak to those around them they direct attention to things that lie beyond the five human senses, and three-dimensional space.

These individuals are seeking quite a different kind of happiness from that of average men. If they belong to a Western religion their outer exposition of teaching has as a center God, more or less according to the dogmas involved. If they are Easterners, their revelations may be different, often having a purely philosophical and abstract character. But with all of them, no matter if we call them Saints, Yogis, and so on, one thing in common can be observed: they live in another world. These men find true happiness and the real aim of their existence in an invisible realm.

The supreme test for man is death, or rather the leaving of the visible

physical form, and it holds no terror for these unique persons. Saints and Yogis do not consider this physical destruction as the greatest evil that can befall a human being. Rather, for them it is liberation, a transition to the higher and perfect life. And so a question arises: where then lies the cardinal difference between these few and the mass of men?

If you will investigate and study their teachings and instructions, you will inevitably find that the distinction lies in the STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. They see things in another light and their reactions are unlike ours. What makes us happy or unhappy has little or no influence on them, and some of them have given us messages of absolute authority that could come only from a definite experience in the realm about which they speak.

Sometimes these revelations have been of such power that many men already indifferent to worldly things have become converted and followed the new path. If we could ask what happened to them, and why they so suddenly changed their ideas and strivings in life, the answer would often be, "Now I see everything from another point of view. What before was of overwhelming importance for me no longer has any meaning, for I see men and their activities, qualities, emotions, and fates as from another world. The causes and effects are much clearer to my inner sight and the inward dissonances and fears have disappeared for ever."

We see that it is just the state of consciousness that changes in these persons and nothing more. Nevertheless we say that a man becomes as if quite another person.

Intuitionally we are apt to express this truth, not even knowing that it is the Truth. For by the statement that a man changes according to his state of consciousness, we recognize a fact of tremendous importance: *that man is Consciousness itself*. This is indirectly recognized by many religions, which speak of the soul in man. And accordingly one person might have an evil soul and another a good, and so on.

In Eastern philosophy, the knowledge of Consciousness has been carried much further than in the West. Generations of wise men have been busy with the problem and have left us many treatises and other writings concerning their experiential findings in the realm of Spirit.

Some of the Western spiritual philosophers have also possessed a high degree of knowledge of the inner human being; but they are very rare. I would like to mention as examples Albert the Great, Claude de St.

Martin, St. Francis of Assisi, and Thomas à Kempis. The first two left their valuable findings in a deeply symbolic form, incomprehensible without long years of study of their strange mode of expression; only comparatively few utterances of the third were recorded and transmitted to us; but the fourth, Thomas à Kempis, left us a long and complete book, *The Imitation of Christ*, in which he describes the Path leading to the higher state of Consciousness, called by him the Kingdom of Heaven, for it was written in accordance with the accepted dogma of his time.

But to-day we have another revelation concerned with the cardinal question of human existence. I am referring here, of course, to the teachings of Sri Maharshi. He told us of the Truth which he found by his own experience, in simple and open language, describing things as they really are.

At the moment it is not my aim to touch on his teachings, for I am seeking some other conclusions: for instance, what does it mean, when some of our brethren possess such a different and far wider state of Consciousness, while others cannot even guess at it? The simplest and perhaps the most appropriate answer would be: for some, the time has not yet come, for ripeness is a product of time in the life of the individual being, that is, for those who still bear the burden of that most primitive form of self-consciousness in man, the ego. Although there cannot be any doubt that all men are brothers, since they belong to the one form of manifestation called humanity, EQUALITY DOES NOT EXIST among them and never did. This statement does not need any special proof, for we can easily verify it for ourselves. For example, an uncivilized and primitive native of New Guinea or Central Africa cannot be considered as an equal of a Socrates or a Gandhi, or even of any average citizen of a cultured country. It is a fact that must be accepted whether we like it or not. But there should be no cause for concern over this: compare a little child with its parents. Who would be concerned because it had not yet developed intelligence and skill equal to its elders? Everyone knows that in the fulness of time the baby will develop into an adult, and the same applies to a primitive savage. Here I mean the law of incarnations.

So we can be sure that in some future epoch mankind will reach a higher level of development. The forerunners, those few who are al-

ready nearing the goal, are a guarantee of that. But we have already said that man is none other than Consciousness. Therefore, the sublime level of that Consciousness, which we so admire in some highly developed men, is undoubtedly the inheritance for future ages of humanity.

It may be interesting for us to know how the world and its various forms of manifestation appears to one whose consciousness is in a far more advanced state than that of the average twenthieth-century man.

He who has reached the level of the Universal Self apparently sees physical phenomena in a way similar to the rest of us, that is, his eyes record the same pictures and impressions. But, at the same time, he does not believe in the reality of these physical apparitions, for him they are just like the mirage of the Sahara, not a drop of water in the magnificent phantom oases and no shade for rest under the illusory palms on the horizon. For him, the activities and aims of men are only like fast-scudding clouds across the immovable eternal skies. He views birth and death with equal eyes; as parts of an unreal film, appearing for a brief time on the screen of Reality. Speech has lost all its former attraction, for his true delight is the Silence, which as Maharshi says is the eternal speech. Similarly discussions and books have no value for him, for he knows that the Real, the Truth, cannot be expressed by the means of language. His nonbelief in the reality of the outer human form, that is the "ego" and its sheaths, is based on the nonrecognition of the reality of his own body, and is derived direct from everyday experience. The happenings, political, social, religious, and so on, are also like the parts of a fast-moving film. He knows that for the majority of men such appearances are still real and he is able to talk about them in the usual way, for he never shows his superiority of outlook to laymen.

Instead of separate beings, such a man sees the ONE life, manifesting itself through all the variety of forms, not necessarily just the human. When his development reaches the state of the Perfect Man, the Master, the Guru—call him what you wish—he is able to make direct contact with this UNIQUE essence of life in all men, without the need of words or outer symbols. This was manifested in its fulness in Sri Maharshi, who gave his instruction (*Upadesa*) and initiation (*Diksha*) to those who were able to accept them, in the most potent form, silence.

For the advanced being his births and deaths are all the same, without

any deeper meaning. He does not remember *the first*, and does not think about *the second*. He does not expect anything from the future and is not concerned with the past.

It is not easy to speak to such a person and try to have a full understanding of his state and thoughts, because his very process of thinking differs so greatly from ours. He "thinks" only when he has to converse with those round him, rather creating his thoughts at need, and not catching them from outside as do others. The normal state of his mind is one of peace and nonacceptance of any of the currents of thought that unceasingly stream around in the mental plane.

We can see that this is something quite opposite to the usual process in men where thoughts incessantly flow through our brains. When he thinks, his concentration is similar to the sharp point of a needle, and it penetrates things quickly and effortlessly. By such a use of the mind's powers, the process of cognition is greatly enlarged and perfected. If he wishes to manifest some *siddhis* (occult powers), the way is open for him by virtue of his ability to concentrate his attention to one point (the so-called will power). But usually such a man, if he is a disciple of a true Master, never makes use of or shows his inner powers, although perfectly conscious of their presence.

The mystical equation (the key to attainment) "who he is," forever solved gives him an unshakable certainty of his illimitable life, and the FORMLESS STATE is his only aim. Then the unavoidable result is FINAL LIBERATION.

Such is our glorious future, the Sublime Consciousness that is ALL IN ALL, without a second.

XII

Pearls from the West

Western countries are usually considered to be rather materialistic and not too devoted to spirituality. Actually this is not so, because of the different manner of life and civilization developed by both the East

and the West. India long ago became famous for her Yogis and Rishis as well as for her carefully expounded philosophic and occult systems.

In this chapter we will occupy ourselves with the Western achievement in the above-named fields. In Europe there are two main currents of religion and spirituality, and also mysticism.

1. *The Eastern European Church*, the so-called Orthodox one having as its origin the Greek tradition of Christianity, which embraced many men who were highly advanced spiritually. These were recognized as Saints of that Church. In my early researches I was interested in such holy men, whose lives have been described in voluminous books on the history of the Eastern part of Christianity. And my findings were quite unexpected, for there are many parallels with Indian Yoga.

Firstly, these Saints placed great emphasis on the self-sacrifice of the aspirant to the spiritual life. The obedience and renunciation of his own will by the young monks were basic virtues that had first to be developed.

Despite popular belief, the Saints were not much occupied with religious dogma, and their conceptions of God as the Supreme Being were close to those of their Indian brethren. The three persons of the Deity are similar to the Indian Trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, while the role of Christ is thought of rather as that of a supreme spiritual Master. One of the most recent of the Eastern Saints, Seraphim of Sarov, who lived about 250 years ago, left to posterity a few written works about the methods in use in his time. As the first step for his disciples, he advised the use of a kind of mental concentration, based on the inner repetition of a short prayer, or God's name. This type of *mantra* was used just as the Yogis do: at first a few thousand times daily, and afterwards the aspirant occupied all his time with it. For counting, he recommended the use of simple rosaries. When the mind of the aspirant gained a certain measure of discipline and became capable of voluntary concentration, he ordered a rhythmical retention of the breath at the end of each prayer (*mantra*). It was very close to the Indian *pranayama*. As a result of these exercises, Saint Seraphim was said to have felt "a wonderful warmth in the heart" connnected with loss of consciousness of earthly surroundings and of some supramental experiences, which he called "reflections of the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Saint described the occult conception of unity with the Whole as "infinite love" reaching to every living being. The chronicles record that wild and ferocious animals such as wolves and bears went to Saint

Seraphim's lonely forest cell, far off in northeastern Russia, and did no harm, but rather "served" him. His miraculous cures were famous, but he himself was the simplest of men and ascribed them to the grace of God, which was showered on men according to their faith. When he felt that the end of his physical being was near, he called his disciples and devotees together and said: "When the Almighty will call His servant Seraphim to Him, bury my body close to my cell, and when in need come to my grave and tell me about your requests, just as if you were speaking to the living man. And I shall hear you, and help will be given to every sincere heart."

Actual cases of miraculous cures and spiritual exaltation were often mentioned in the records of his life.

The Saints usually spent their lives in strict asceticism, eating very little and then only the simplest of food such as dry bread and water, while in steady contemplation before the little altars in their cells. After death many of their bodies showed no trace of decomposition for many hundreds of years, even though lying in open coffins, which were accessible to the faithful and pilgrims.

2. *In the Western European Church* of Latin tradition, many of the Saints lived similar lives, but here I would like to mention only one of them in particular, the well-known Thomas à Kempis, who lived in the fourteenth century. He left us the already mentioned inspired religio-philosophical work, the famous *Imitation of Christ* based on his own spiritual experiences and attainment, and expounded for the benefit of followers. It is a kind of "Yoga of the West."

When reading the verses collected together in four books, which contain many chapters, one cannot help but admire their high level and at the same time almost identical conceptions with those of the best representatives of the philosophic thought of India. When studying the teachings of Sri Maharshi, years before I met him, I was struck by their similarity to many chapters by Thomas à Kempis, although sometimes expressed in a different form. Later, I collected some of the Saint's verses and included them in my little Portuguese book, which was dedicated to the Maharshi. Some of them were translated into English and presented to him at his request in July 1949. They speak for themselves, and the reader devoted to Sri Maharshi may appreciate for himself the beauty of the verses and the depth of their conception, being so close to the utterances of the Great Rishi five hundred years later.

They were selected from the first book of the work. Our understanding will be clearer still if we sometimes substitute for the word "God," as used by the author of the *Imitation*, those with which we are more familiar, such as the Self, Absolute, Reality, and so on. In the words of Sri Maharshi:

"There is but ONE Master."

The following excerpts are from the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis:

He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord.

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and serve Him alone.

This is the highest Wisdom, by despising the world, to make progress towards the kingdom of heaven.

It is vanity, therefore, to seek perishing riches, and to trust in them.

Vanity, also it is, to court honors, and to lift up one's self on high.

Vanity is it to follow the desires of the flesh, and to desire that for which thereafter there must be a heavy penalty.

Vanity is it to wish a long life, and take but little pains about a good life.

Vanity is it to attend only to the present life, and not to look forward to the things that are to come.

It is vanity to love what is passing away with all speed, and not to be hastening thither where endless joy abideth.

Study therefore, to wean thy heart from love of visible things, and to betake thee to the things unseen: for they that follow the pleasures of their senses sully conscience and lose the grace of God.

Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the courses of the stars, and neglected himself.

He that knoweth himself, becometh vile to himself (ego), and taketh no delight in the praises of men.

The more thou knowest, and the better, so much the heavier will thy judgment therefore be, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thine ignorance.

The highest and most useful lesson we can learn is this: To know truly and to look down upon ourselves (our egos).

Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself, not by figures and passing sounds, but as it is in itself.

Our own way of thinking and our sense often deceive us, and see but a little way.

He to whom all things are one, who refereth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and abide in God at peace.

O Truth! my God, make me one with Thee in everlasting charity.

The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple, so much the more and deeper things doth he understand without labor, for he receiveth the light of understanding from on high.

Who hath a stronger conflict than he who striveth to overcome himself?

And this ought to be our business, namely: To overcome ourselves; and every day to get more the mastery over ourselves; and to make progress for the better.

The humble knowledge of oneself is a surer way to God than deep researches after science.

Truly, when the day of judgment cometh, it will not be asked of us, what we have read, but what we have done; not what fine discourses we have made, but how like religious we have lived.

Tell me where now are all those doctors and masters with whom thou wast well acquainted while they were yet alive and in the glory of their learning?

Others now hold their preferments and I know not whether they ever think of them.

Truth is to be sought in the holy Scriptures; not eloquence.

All holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written.

The man who is not yet perfectly dead to self is soon tempted and overcome in little and paltry things.

It is by resisting the passions therefore, and not by serving them, that true peace of heart is to be found.

Peace, therefore, is not in the heart of the carnal man, nor in the man who is devoted to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.

Continual peace dwelleth with the humble; but in the heart of the proud is frequent envy and indignation.

Open not thy heart to every man, but discuss thy business with one that is wise and feareth God.

A fancy for places and changing of residence hath deluded many.

Fly as much as possible the tumult of men; for the treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, even though they be discoursed of with a simple intention.

But devout conferences upon spiritual things are no small help to spiritual progress—especially where persons of congenial mind and spirit are associated together in God.

What is the reason why some of the Saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because their whole study was to mortify themselves wholly from all earthly desires. . . .

All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations, and profited by them.

XIII

What Is Most Important to You?

The worldly life has its false charm, but only for those who are unable to think deeply, impartially, and analytically and are incapable of a practical discrimination between two things: *the really important, and the not so important.*

Our inner attitude will betray itself in our everyday activities and it is just these everyday activities that should have a deeper meaning, if we ever want to solve the mystery of the other forms of life often called the after-death existence. No one can possibly describe for us the conditions prevailing after the separation from our physical body. The best so-called clairvoyants can see only through the medium of their personalities, which are enclosed in their astral and mental sheaths. Whoever really understands this also knows that in the physical life one sees only with his physical eyes, which give a picture of the outer world similar to that seen by our fellow men, providing that our sight is sound. But in the equally ephemeral astral and mental planes of existence (that is, after physical death) it is different. There are no separate sense organs appropriate to those other worlds. Things will reach one's consciousness

through the colored glasses of feelings and thoughts that one used to have while living on the earth. In no way will there be uniformity of vision. The only element that counts is the man's own inner condition, which, after leaving the body and for some time between incarnations, will create for him a particular form of existence. In brief, AS WAS THE LIFE OF THE MAN, SO WILL BE HIS DEATH.

Whatever was most important for him while still alive on this earth will be the deciding factor. From this we can see that there are as many deaths, as there are lives. And this act cannot be changed.

One who has lived with his eyes directed to the Real, to spiritual things, and who has sought his true and undisputed inheritance—the wisdom of that which he actually is (Realization of the Self)—is not at all concerned with the question of death. Cf. verse 330 of the *Viveka-Chudamani* by Sankaracharya: "He who while living realizes unity (with the supreme), does so also when devoid of the body. . . ."

This has been explained elsewhere in this book. Now we will analyze the gist of the ordinary life of an average man. If we sacrifice the inner work, it means only one thing: that material matters are more important to us than the spiritual. We know that our attachment to our fellow travellers in this incarnation (that is, family, acquaintances, and so on) does not belong to the highest things for which we can strive and reach. No one endowed with even a little reason would deny certain duties and debts, which we have to pay to our karmic surroundings. These exist on a certain plane and must be fulfilled. Even so, we often commit a very tragic error, against the express teachings of all the Masters:

a. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's." (*Gospels of Christ*)
b. "You can perform your everyday duties and at the same time advance spiritually (strive for it)." (*Maharshi's Gospel*)

The refusal to follow the teachings of our great brothers may be twofold:

1. To utterly ignorant persons who do not think about the higher meaning of life (and this applies to the vast majority of present-day humanity), it is only a natural process—for they do not know

better—to arrange their physical lives, raise families and care for their needs, surrender to their passions, and so on. The sublime words of the Masters are inaccessible to them and consequently their responsibilities are less, and not as urgent. They have ample time for a slow combustion of their sins, as we call manifestations of egoism.

2. But for persons who already know (even mentally) the previously quoted instructions from the two Gospels, things are quite different. They cannot defend themselves by pleading ignorance. The very fact that these not too numerous persons have come by the fragmentary knowledge of the basic Law of Unity can never be erased or forgotten. Often they try to conceal it with an artificial veil of oblivion, in order to avoid the obligations attendant upon such knowledge.

Sometimes, they transfer their prospective intensive spiritual search to the future, which it might be, though why and how are not explained, more suitable for the purpose. Do they actually know their future, that they feel entitled to refer to it? Usually, we do not even know what the next day may bring us and whether or not it may be our last on this earth. Therefore in my eyes, any reference to the future does not pass the examination of our deeper reason. It might simply be TOO LATE.

Thomas à Kempis in his wonderful book says: "My friend, why delay till tomorrow, what can be done to-day?" Anyway, we have many examples round us, for we see individuals living in worldly surroundings who, in spite of them, try, as Christ told us, to play their best part.

The karmic afflictions will not cease by the mere fact that we are occupied with them only while delaying attention to more real things. In the case of the persons mentioned in Paragraph 2 above, the material troubles and bodily difficulties may often be just a reminder, a secret HINT from the Higher Power. If we understand the wordless speech we are fortunate. If not, the remembering will continue until we are compelled to bury our emphemeral aims. In the second instance, of course, it may cost us more. We know that this is the only money accepted for any payment in the school of life, that is, suffering, as Sri Maharshi has said.

Our undue attachment to surroundings comes from the ONE PRI-

MORDIAL SIN, for we believe that other men, as well as ourselves, are just the bodies. Some will be indignant at this and raise a voice of protest. But they are deceiving themselves, and perhaps unconsciously trying to deceive others. Knowing little about our own Self-Being, what can we know about the true existence of our relatives and friends? Of course, seeing only the bodies, we love only them (astromental functions also belong to matter) and we try to make happy these material shadows that we see all our lives. It is quite another question whether we really succeed in making happy that which bears in its own nature the element of unhappiness, our respected friend of everyday life, the beloved ego. We know that no man has ever been completely happy in his incarnations. Here I am not referring to the Perfect Ones, whom we call the Masters or Teachers of humanity.

When losing a member of our family by death, we do not think at all about the further fate of the deceased person; but we feel the loss, like a loss of something belonging to us. The ego weeps and wails about another ego. What a miserable condition!

We know that the Master Maharshi was never affected by the death of his relatives, friends, or disciples. He even refused to talk about such matters. Once, when told about the passing away of one of his early disciples, who had rendered him many services in his young years, Bhagavan drily remarked: "What is there to cry for? Nothing is changed!" (meaning nothing was changed for the affected man by his physical death). Of course, for such a one, who knows that death is only an unreal scarecrow, it was just a natural reaction. But would a man capable of reasoning be able to follow the example of a wise one instead of that of the ignorant egos round him?

What has just been stated are not mere suggestions, for suggestion is not a method to be used by the disciples of the Great Rishi. They are given to you only as material for deeper thinking. Analyze them, and find your own solution: this is the only way to spiritual development. In order to bring good results, spiritual food must be digested just the same as physical. Anything imposed on a man from outside, not having passed through the laboratory of his consciousness, is a very fragile and perishable thing. We see how the great religions of this world are powerless to reform humanity, their own adherents included. The act of baptizing or head-shaving performed on a young child does not matter at all, as we can easily see. So where can we find some solace for these

sad facts of life? The solace exists; moreover, it depends on ourselves to partake of it.

In the midst of this worldly, bedlamlike life, the inner voice often speaks through us and our brother men. Some persons want more light, more reason in their existence, more hope and brighter horizons ahead. Are you one of them? In a moment of outer silence, try to seek the Silence inside yourself. Operate with your everyday mind; it can give you some help if rightly directed. Also, reject what is illogical in you and your behavior; it will be a great step ahead. The true vision of the real Self will not come so easily. But always remember: without beginning the journey, the traveler will still be in the same place.

Thinking of ourselves as bodies, we naturally regard all others in the same way. Christ said: "I will not leave you orphans." To this great Master the inner, real man was all and the outer form almost nothing.

Often we speak of the immortality of the Master who recently passed away before our own eyes. The Maharshi said to us: "Where can I go? I will remain here. . . ." How can this be understood? We cannot see the divine figures of our Masters any more, except that of the Maharshi, left to us by him in the form of his photographs. But this is not all. He must live in you and me. What does it mean? Only that we should arrange our lives after his radiant example, follow his hints and offer him all our efforts. For he is really no other than ourselves, *in our best and absolute meaning.* It is his voice that speaks in us when we try to live and act in accord with the Inner Truth in us and not with this empty world. The strange and irresistible power of love, which came from Maharshi and transformed many human beings, was—in its ultimate end—the illimitable power of the union with our own eternal Self-Atman.

Such love cannot be extinguished by myriads of existences. It will shine on our Path, until we become one with the Path, and therefore with the Master. I know that the mystery of the attainment cannot be duly expressed in words, but it may awaken in you the same inner spiritual current that will do the rest.

PART TWO

Chapters XIV-XX

Dedicated to the Blessed Memory of
Sri Ramana Maharshi
the Last Great Rishi of India

XIV

Masters and Disciples

Even in these days there are holy and spiritually advanced men who have their own followers, or disciples. The East and the West both have their Saints and Yogis. People in the West seek salvation, as they call it, and the East liberation, or Realization of Being. Seekers are often confused by the many teachings and seeming differences of doctrines of these advanced beings, and also by the old religious traditions of the ancient Masters. So they ask: Where is the absolute Truth? Which is the surest way? The choice, apparently, does not appear too easy. Every human being has his spiritual Master, in whose steps he will follow, now or later, in this life or in the distant future. So there is no need to worry about it.

If the search has already been started, it is the man's heart that will decide, not cold deliberation as to which Master is wiser, or which teaching seems to be in accord with one's own former accepted theories. This is not the way to find the Master.

The Master must be the incarnation of an ideal for us, without blemish or imperfection. So, it is evident, the more progressive and advanced the man is, the more elevated must be his ideal, and he will accept only the highest type of spiritual teacher whose doctrine is *all-embracing* and an answer to all questions.

Saints and Yogis preach their own definite and therefore limited doctrines and systems of development, preferring some particular re-

ligion or philosophy, for the simple reason, that by these means they reach—in comparison with the average person—their elevated status of consciousness or knowledge of God.

A Catholic, Moslem, or Indian Saint has his own idea or name for the Highest Being. A Yogi also has the same and he usually follows one of the seven systems generally accepted in India, believing his own path is the best. For himself, he is probably right, but his way may not be appropriate for many of his followers. Yet he tries to convert others to his own religious philosophy.

One who seeks unity in the search for Truth and not differences could not possibly follow such a Master. He knows that all names, ideas, and qualities given the Supreme Being are dependent on man's mind, and do not affect or express the true essence of the Highest. The earnest seeker would have to reject these various systems advocated by his above-mentioned brothers as unsuitable. But that would not mean that there is no Master for him. Masters exist, though they are extremely rare, and come into this world only at very long intervals of time. Fortunately they are above and beyond particular creeds and do not try to convert people from one religion to another.

In India for thousands of years and right up to the present, they have been known as Rishis, or Sages, Seers. It is not my purpose to delve into history and evoke those Great Beings of the past. There is no need. Sri Ramana Maharshi is the highest type of Master known to me, and one living in our own time. He taught the pure Ultimate Truth for those who were able to accept it.

He was little concerned with any particular form of creed. He spoke with visitors and devotees in their own language. With Hindus, he used terms with which they were acquainted. But with others he used quite different words when conveying his wisdom to them. So, independent of creed or form, listeners got illumination and explanation of their own religion, the Rishi being able to make them understand the Light that before was invisible to them.

He had no need of words or long discussions. Others have tried many times to express in books what the Maharshi revealed in a few sentences with much better results.

He never tried to convey the inexpressible idea of God in words. He had the unique power of assisting, without speech, the earnest seeker to find within himself the Supreme, in Silence.

And he called the Silence the perfect speech. To mature followers he made the revealing and ultimate statement: "There are no gods, reincarnation, or other widely held theories. Your real duty is only to be! That is all."

He refused to allow others to deify him when alive and once said: "The real inner Being dwelling in you is just this Bhagavan, as you call me. That is what you have to realize." When I say that the whole life of Ramana Maharshi was an example of uninterrupted Realization of the Ultimate Truth, you will understand that even the most progressive and advanced seekers (disciples) can readily find in him their supreme Master and without any change in religious denomination.

They simply pass beyond them, forever elated by the vision of Infinity—the Absolute—born while listening to the Silence of their Master —the Great Rishi.

XV

Sri Ramana as I Knew Him

The title of this chapter may not be quite appropriate, for those who knew Sri Ramana Maharshi know him forever. This is because even a single encounter with the Great Rishi on our life's path is an event that can never be forgotten or dimmed in our consciousness by the passage of time. For some of us, it meant a complete change in the course of our present and future lives, and this could never have happened otherwise. The scope of the subject is far too broad to be described in detail within the framework of such a short chapter and therefore I am compelled to condense it as much as possible.

The first time that I met him, I had come directly from the cart that had brought me from the Tiruvannamalai Railway Station. Before visiting the *Ashram*, I had been conversant with the Master's teachings for some four years and the many photographs had made his features quite familiar to me. So, when I was ushered into the dimly lit dining-hall,

I was able to recognize him immediately, although at that time his figure was much more meager than in the pictures I had seen. He was sitting close to a wall eating his evening meal. I bowed in greeting, and with an incomparable expression of kindness on his face, he asked me where the other devotee was who had arranged to come with me. I wondered at his very sharp memory, because my letter advising of my proposed visit had been written many months before. My friend's absence was explained, as he had not been in a position to come. Then Sri Ramana ordered that supper be brought to me.

It was not a matter of deliberation, but an intuitive flash, when I became conscious that at last I had found what I had been seeking all my life. Immediately I became absorbed into the presence of the Master. At first I was worried about his precarious physical state; but my grief quickly became dissolved in his spiritual radiation. The outer appearance soon merged into that mysterious inner link with him, which has remained unbroken from that moment up to the present time. While I was at his feet I learned to stop the thought-currents in my mind, a thing that formerly had devoured long years of effort and had never been completely successful despite the many exercises: they were quite inadequate in the sublime spiritual atmosphere surrounding the Master, which in itself permitted much faster development. The key to it, concentration, came of itself.

Firstly, I became aware that "there is a THING, above all things which I had ever known before," and this was the most important result. This cannot be adequately described in words, but nevertheless, perhaps some direct hints will give an idea about it. The eyes of the Master conveyed in silence that there is a STATE that is beyond and untouched by all human troubles: that STATE which is certainty and peace in itself, in which we know everything, for then everything is in us. This mysterious process in consciousness was induced by the Maharshi, or rather by his presence, for he was himself all harmony and peace. I tried to analyze the changes that arose in me when I meditated at his feet. I found that the mind was easily freed from thoughts, and that memory in its usual meaning was no more, along with its concomitant subdivisions of time, past, present, and the so-called future.

Instead, there appeared something that cannot be properly described in words. Perhaps, a conception of living eternity would be best. There were no visions, but, strangely enough, one knew that there could be

nothing unknown to oneself, for by completely directing the attention one could know everything. These experiences have been more explicitly described in one of the writer's previous books: *In Days of Great Peace*.

In some wonderful way, the Maharshi seemed to supervise these inner processes in us, just as an operator watches the work of complicated machinery, which he knows thoroughly. Moreover, he mysteriously helped in these inner experiences, but how, still remains closed to me.

At the same time, without any deliberation from my side, a potent love for him was created in my heart, simply because it could not be otherwise. Altogether, a man emerged from these experiences greatly changed and often with a totally different conception about everything in this world. For myself, I called it the "spiritual alchemy of the Master."

As time passed I ceased to consider Sri Ramana as a being of flesh and blood. And this was the most wonderful experience and conquest. From that time the Master could never be lost to me, although I was only too well aware that his months and days on this earth were numbered and few remained. I saw the Man-Spirit, the indestructible Essence instead of just the mortal frame. And this was the chief factor that enabled me to bear his physical departure without any inner catastrophe. The word spirit is plainly misused by the world, which cannot connect the term with anything real, often confusing it with emotional-mental impressions and creating something indefinite and dim. All his long life Sri Maharshi taught that the true reality is beyond all forms, no matter to which plane of existence they belong. And yet, for many, many persons this remains as only a myth or theory.

After the Master left this earth, I tried to analyze what it was, in his appearance amongst us, that was the most important and deciding—thing for future generations. I reached the conclusion that IT WAS HE HIMSELF, BECAUSE HE SHOWED THE EXAMPLE OF THE FINAL ATTAINMENT, THEREBY MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE TO US.

An infinite eternal wisdom lies in all his utterances and he confirmed it, being himself that wisdom. For example, how could one, seeing Maharshi's supremacy over matter and suffering when his body was attacked by a dread disease, so terrifying for the average person, ever doubt the possibility of his overcoming it were it necessary? If such a

Sage testifies to the immaterial Truth of Being, how could I seek something apart from IT?

The Maharshi himself knew well about his deciding role in the lives of those who were fortunate enough in their *karmas* to come to him from all sides of the world. He says: "Association with the Sages who have realized the Truth removes material attachments. These attachments being removed the attachments of the mind are also destroyed. Those for whom attachments of the mind are destroyed become one with THAT which is for ever motionless. They attain Liberation while yet alive. Cherish therefore the association with such Sages."

XVI

The True Greatness

When you send your son to school, you do not expect him to find a classroom filled only with books, ranging from the elementary to the degree of Doctor of Science, and so on. Surely you expect a competent teacher as well, one able to transmit gradually and according to the mentality of his pupils the knowledge that he himself possesses. Books only help to refresh the mind with ideas already implanted in it.

In the realm of spiritual instruction, the person who is to be a Teacher or Master is far more decisive and necessary. The land as yet unexplored, beyond our five senses and invisible to the physical eye, emotions, and thoughts, offers many puzzling questions to one who tries to enter it, more so than any physical science, even in its depths.

Among seekers after the Ultimate Truth it has always been accepted that without a Master in some form or another there cannot be any true achievement.

We will analyze here briefly why such an attitude has been established. Any complicated precision machine must be operated only by one who knows its construction and possibilities well. How much more complicated to the outer eye is the invisible mechanism that we call the

human psyche? And how much greater must be the experience of a person who undertakes the real living of such a complex system of existence.

Those who are treading the Path of spiritual achievement know that, apart from all forms of instruction, there is needed an EXAMPLE, which must be kept foremost in the mind and heart of the disciple. In other words, there must be an impeccable ideal prototype proving the actual possibility of achievement. Such an ideal must be free from all stains and imperfections, otherwise our inner tribunal of consciousness will never follow it. "Physician, heal thyself."

Such great Masters come to humanity only after long periods of time, in order to collect round themselves those advanced enough to follow the thorny Path of Liberation from the misery of ignorance of our ultimate aim of existence and from its unavoidable result: suffering.

"Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" said a Great Master twenty centuries ago. So, if a real Master is a *sine qua non* for each sincere aspirant in the search of that Truth, how will such an aspirant realize the greatness of his Master? Cases vary, but here I wish to throw more light on the inner processes of one who was attached to a spiritual Master of our own epoch. The method of comparison as shown is the most conclusive in the analysis.

It is common knowledge that with the coming of early manhood a large part of a young man's being is turned to the sexual side of physical life. There is no need to underline its power, or the immense labor and effort needed to dominate passion in all its manifestations, even temporarily. But the young Ramana, the future Maharshi, achieved the final victory in the first battle, if such a battle even existed for him. Nevertheless, in one of his early hymns we find a prayer in which he asks for grace to be exempt from the snare of sensuality. Anyway, it may be that he wrote it rather for our sakes.

The average human being, at least when he is young, is tightly bound up with his closest surroundings, his earthly family. In it he seeks the support and the starting point for his subsequent life. The Maharshi, then called Venkataraman, left all these ties behind him when he was only sixteen.

When Christ, amidst the impenetrable crowd listening to His teaching, was told that His mother and brothers wanted to see Him, He said simply: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? For whosoever

shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and my sister and mother." We know that for Maharshi his circle of disciples and devotees replaced the physical ties of family.

An instinctive desire for material security bids many of us seek after all kinds of bread-winning knowledge. The young Ramana at once discarded all of them without any doubt or fear. His search was for the very Kingdom of God, the uninterrupted union with the unique Reality-Spirit or God, which he reached in his permanent *Samadhi* some years later. And he called this "the final achievement, the Natural State," pointing out to us the unmistakable goal of Being.

Now compare your own actual strivings and their aims and the greatness of the Rishi may illuminate your mind.

The Maharshi spent long years in caves in the jungle, in the neighborhood of the holy hill of Arunachala, without any visible defense against poisonous snakes and insects, which still pay their unwelcome visits in the tropical heat of South India. To us, the loneliness of such long days and nights would be terrifying and impossible without what we call any of the necessary comforts of life.

Do we realize what immeasurable will power, steadfast faith, and experienced wisdom were needed by the young ascetic to overcome conditions that would appear quite unbearable to many of us, even when our intentions were of the best?

Even the slightest deviation from our accepted way of life brings trouble. But he was above and beyond it all. How small our own way of life now seems to be by comparison.

In the last thirty years of his life, the Maharshi accepted some form of social life, leaving the caves and coming down to the foot of the sacred hill. But that meant streams of visitors for him, assailing him with questions, many of which must have appeared ridiculous to the Sage, being sheer ignorant nonsense and egoism. And yet he freely gave advice and teaching to all who sincerely asked for it, and in an incomparably simple form, which is the product of true spiritual wisdom.

For himself, he had no trace of personal life, which for us is usually the core of our own existence. How many of us are able to understand or follow such renunciation? If we try to imitate the Master we will then realize the greatness of him who achieved the glorious end.

And now, a few words about his final martyrdom. Those who are able to understand its purpose and aim can only bow to the dust

before such a sacrifice. Mysteriously, a dreadful and torturing illness befell his body. Everyone knew that it was fatal. We would be terrified at the very thought of such a thing happening to us. And yet he wanted no cure; he went the thorny way to physical death, more than eighteen months long, without any complaints or fears. To the last, he retained his serenity and strength of mind and spirit. As I said in *In Days of Great Peace*, his suffering was a purifying fire for our souls, and the hardness of many hearts was melted and transformed by his example into something nobler and better.

When the young Ramana departed from his paternal house to go to Arunachala, he left a short note saying that he was going in search of his Father, in answer to his call. And he spent his life with the Father at the foot of Arunachala, which has always been the holy abode of Yogis and Saints in the past.

Eventually the inevitable end drew near. The supreme moment of leaving the body was imminent. Some Western devotees and visitors who were watching near the Maharshi's room that last night could hear his failing voice calling "Father, Father." A few hours later, the son entered the eternal dwelling of his Father forever, liberated from the sheath of matter, which he always regarded as a dream.

How many of us will have such a fearless and inspiring end?

All that has been said, of course, cannot describe even in the smallest degree the spiritual splendor of the manifestation of the last Great Rishi of India. And it has not been my intention to offer such a description. My aim has been to compare with our own the power and spiritual beauty of such a life, so that we can better realize the true greatness of the Man whom we called the Maharshi.

When we try to imagine ourselves performing what he did, the labor facing us seems almost crushing. But there is another side of this that is most constructive and inspiring. We cannot but recognize in the Master a perfect guide, to whom we can entrust ourselves forever. This is the way of each disciple who has found his Guru. There are no more doubts or hesitation.

If the pupil cannot clearly see in his Master a perfect example and idea, he will never be able to bear the burden of the Path. He will simply fall and leave it.

Sri Maharshi was, and is, the giver of inner bliss. In my life I saw

saints and wise men; but none of them had such spiritual power as the Maharshi. The supreme attainment of the Rishi, which in the past needed incredible time and toil, must of necessity be balanced, as everything in the world, by the immense and limitless bliss when the goal is reached.

Being united with the inexhaustible Source of that bliss, he could shed it around. Perhaps this is the cause of his unique influence.

When I sat at his feet looking into his eyes, the silent initiation emanating from him seemed to whisper: "Yes, look as long as you can. For here is a mirror of your own and everyone's—Imperishable Life."

XVII

Seekers and "Seekers"

Some sincere devotees of Sri Maharshi seem to be worried by the fact that they were able to spend only a limited time in his presence. Others, who were unable to arrange their journeys before the Master left this world, are concerned that they never saw him in his physical body.

In some cases this concern is occasioned by reading meaningless statements by persons who lived for a long time close to Ramanshram, and yet did not profit by their proximity to the Master. Often these persons feel superior to the first group, and display more pride in this than in real inner progress.

There is no better way of showing the truth of the matter than to quote the Master himself.

Firstly: there is an incident related by Paul Brunton in a letter to me on August 27, 1951. "When an ardent young devotee of Sri Ramana was compelled to leave the *Ashram*, in which he had stayed for some years, he came, on the eve of his compulsory departure, to take farewell of the Maharshi. Unable to master his sadness, he wept bitterly. Sri

Maharshi asked him: 'Why are you crying? Don't you know this *Ashram* is only for beginners? Now that you are beginning to make some advance it is needful for you to go away if you are to make further progress.'" This young Indian subsequently developed excellently and later became the Guru of his own *Ashram*.

Secondly: we should always remember the words of the Master recorded in the early thirties: "Gunpowder needs only a spark to catch fire; but more time is needed to set charcoal alight, and still more for wet fuel."

Those coming to their Master may need a shorter or longer time to obtain full spiritual benefit or initiation from him, according to the degree of their inner ripeness and progress.

We know that the majority of visitors never became disciples or even devotees of Sri Maharshi, being unprepared to take his doctrine to heart and put it into practice.*

Thirdly: in these *Talks* we read that it is *not good* for the disciple to be too long in the proximity of his Master, and various reasons are given for this apparently strange or even paradoxical statement. I believe that they are mainly psychological. A disciple may become too familiar with his Master, which is definitely unfavorable for his inner progress.

The *Ashram* was like a hothouse. It would have been wrong to spend too much time there, for to be healthy and strong the plant must continue to grow in the outside world.

The visible Guru (the "outer Guru," as the Maharshi says) is needed only as long as the devotee has not been spiritually awakened. There are other sayings of the Master on this point and the attentive student can find them for himself.

I know of a few cases where devotees who were prepared to remain at the *Ashram* for the rest of their lives suddenly realized, after obtaining the Master's Grace, that their duty was to work for him in the world. And when they changed their decision accordingly and were ready to leave, they mysteriously found silent approval in the gaze of the Great Rishi. And they left in peace and hope.

But some unsuccessful persons often preferred to remain in the hothouse. Age, like the length of time spent at the feet of the Master, is also

* See *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Vols. 1, 2, & 3, published by Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamelai.

of no overwhelming importance in deciding when attainment is to be reached.

We find an enlightening verse in the famous Buddhist *Dhammapada* which says: "If a man gets no enlightenment in a long life it means he has grown old uselessly."

Some wet fuels may spend their lives without any visible profit, whereas young gunpowders may obtain Grace almost immediately.

Moreover, the Master told us that initiation can be obtained also without any physical *darshan* of the Master. There are in the world today some persons whose relationship with the Master is by no means less true and real, though they never saw his bodily form.

"What a pity!" the Great Rishi said on one occasion. *"They think I am this body!"*

XVIII

The Doctrine

It might be useful for disciples of Sri Maharshi to have his doctrine summarized as briefly as possible. The following pages are extracts and adapted renderings from Maharshi's teachings.

I have tried to collect here and put together the Master's most important statements that deal with different questions connected with the Maharshi's doctrine of Realization of the Self in man.

GOD

Sri Ramana Maharshi does not differentiate God from the Absolute Self. His famous saying is:

> If God were not, or if He were different from the Self, He would be a Self-less God which means, not possessing any self-consciousness, and that is simply absurd.

Men have had many different conceptions about the Supreme Being, from a stony idol of a savage, to the personal God of many contemporary religions. These conceptions are according to their own inner development.

> If man recognizes himself as being a person and with a form, his God must also be a personal God with a form.

To those firm believers in forms the Master said:

> If you think that you really possess legs, arms, nose, etc., why should not God have the same?

But when asked about the naked and Ultimate Truth, his teachings were apparently different. Apart from the already quoted sentence about God being the Self or the Whole, the Rishi says that there are actually no individual gods such as Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, and so on.

> They are only as real as are men who still believe in their separate existence.

This of course demonstrates the unreality of all phenomena, and this is the Ultimate Truth.

> Not one of these gods ever appeared to be and told me "I am Shiva," "I am Vishnu," etc., said the Sage Ramana.

God the omnipresent, immaterial, eternal SELF—I—ABSOLUTE, independent from everything, pure consciousness, is NOT affected by any act of manifestation in the phenomenal world.

> Just as the Sun, which sends its rays into the space around it, without any desire, purpose or attachment, so is God. But under the influence of those rays of energy innumerable forms of Life appear and disappear on the planets round the Sun. But "it" is not touched or affected by all these processes. So it is with God.

A close example might be that of space, which is eternally free, and cannot be affected by anything: the appearance, existence, and annihilation of worlds and of all the objects inside of this space cannot add to

or subtract anything from that space, which remains illimitable and infinite.

But the Maharshi also recognized, when dealing with simpler, religious men, that God can have different aspects, according to a man's limitations and conceptions. "God takes pity on the loving devotee and appears to him as a Guru, taking human form, so that a man can see and talk with Him, as one body with another."

And it is not God but the creation that is responsible to the Laws of God for its activities, not God Himself, Who is not a person.

The laws imposed by Him are a measure of man's responsibility to those Laws. But God, Absolute, Self is apart from and beyond them.

> God is at the same time, Being and Non-Being; but in no way is He a negation. It is hard to speak about Him, who transcends all speech and thought.

The old sayings, that "God is within you," that the "Kingdom of Heaven is inside you" are perfectly clear and understandable when we remember that the same Self, being God, is our innermost core.

Unchangeable, timeless, deathless, IT shines through the sheaths of different kinds of matter, and is resplendent in ITS fulness in the Perfect Man, the true Master.

THE SPIRIT-SELF

The Maharshi gave us a realistic and strict definition of the Spirit, a term that was, and is, often misunderstood and wrongly used by men. A firm and definite idea was necessary, and the Rishi provided us with it in a form accessible to many of us, and not necessarily only to specialist-psychologists.

When we try to peel our consciousness of all impermanent and unstable elements, then what remains is our true Self, or Spirit, *Atman*.

This discovery may be accomplished if we persevere in the process of a special kind of deep meditation: to reject everything that is not permanent from our "I" awareness and to cast aside all fleeting elements.

"Then still remains something, which is independent and free, nameless, formless, beyond all speech and thought. It is eternal and self-radiant" says Maharshi. This is the Self.

A long effort is usually needed for this great task. Our minds must be well trained and subdued into obedience before the aim can be reached. This means the ability of so-called concentration of the mind.*

This achievement, of course, is the *Samadhi*, the state of spiritual ecstasy, in which the material world ceases to exist for our purified consciousness, then freed from the slavery of our senses. Then we ARE in the Spirit-Self, beyond the threefold ego-individuality, in the so-called Fourth State.

To identify ourselves with this fourth element means to live in the Spirit as the pure Self. There is just this something that remains after the three sheaths are rejected, the immortal, eternal, radiant Self. It cannot be limited by any form, no matter how subtle this form may be in different (illusory) worlds, known to occultists. For it is of its nature formless, thoughtless, and spaceless, being the very antithesis of any kind of matter, the above-mentioned subtle worlds included.

So to the Maharshi the Spirit is not a wide conception, but an everyday, every-minute experience, as the air that we breathe is for us. And the Master insists on the experimental method of investigation into the Spirit-Self.

The Self (Universal or Cosmic Consciousness) is ONE and indivisible, Spirit being only another name for IT. It is the only thing that really exists, says the Maharshi.

Now we can see why the Master used to insist firmly on the experimental knowledge of the Self or Spirit in ourselves. He did not give theoretical talks about Reality, for he knew only too well that they would be useless for mankind. Making the finding of the Self accessible to us by giving us the potent and infallible means, the Self-Inquiry (*Vichara*), the Great Rishi created a new epoch in the human search for eternal life and for the conquest of death, supported by his own example, which is most essential.

He gave us the exact equation of the Spirit that I am representing here in a simple mathematical form as follows:

Equation 1

$$S(c) = A - (P + F + T)$$

Equation 2

$$A > (P + F + T)$$

* See *Concentration* by Mouni Sadhu, published by Harper, 1959.

Where: $S(c)$ is spiritual Consciousness or Self.
P is physical body consciousness.
F is feelings or astral plane (of occultists).
T is thoughts or mental plane (of occultists).
A is awareness or affirmation of our Being.

From these equations we can easily find the following solutions by an analytical process.

In Equation No. 1, the more room in our Awareness (A), that the elements P, F, and T occupy, the smaller is the difference between A and $P + F + T$, which means that our spiritual Consciousness, $S(c)$, is then an infinitesimal quantity. This is the case with the average man in this epoch of *Kali-Yuga*.

But then we have Equation No. 2, from which we see that in spite of the aforesaid, the awareness is always greater than the three lower elements, so that the light of the spiritual Consciousness is always present in every living being, although it may be almost invisible because of the thick shrouds of matter enveloping it.

From the other side, the smaller the sum of $(P + F + T)$, the greater is our A, striving ultimately to the final form of the equation, when $(P + F + T) = 0$ (zero), i.e., $S(c) = A$. This is the case of a Perfect Man, of a Master, whose everyday consciousness is all the time the spintual one, or the pure Self. We can easily see that under this equation may be included all beings (not only human). We see that everything depends upon the amount of the changeable and perishable elements P, F, and T, and their relation to A.

Why then are men so different? The quality of A depends directly upon the quantity of the three above-mentioned lower factors P, F, and T.

At the same time we see the infinite possibilities of variations among P, F, and T, which give us the same varities for A. Therefore, the number of different individual beings is practically unlimited, until the sum of $(P + F + T)$ becomes equal to 0 (zero). Then A becomes EVERYTHING, $(S(c)$, and this would be in accordance with the scriptures and the teachings of the Maharshi. Those who know enough mathematics will understand the truthfulness of the statement about the infinite possibilities for the numbers of individual beings, when they remember the formula of combinations (used in Newton's famous bino-

mial theorem), composed of three elements—here *P*, *F*, and *T* and possessing infinite QUANTITATIVE varieties between themselves.

THE EGO-INDIVIDUALITY

It is composed of three elements in man: physical body, feelings (astral body), and thoughts (mental body). Its assertion is separateness from the rest of the world through all its three subdivisions.

The ego is utterly unreal, being only a temporary link between the physical body and the Self. It is mortal, and disappears with the death of the individual.

Reality is only that which persists forever and is changeless. Sometimes the Master, for the sake of simplicity, called the ego a phantom creature, feeding on the body and accepting different bodies, but itself being without any form. "It is a hybrid," said the Sage.

The ego believes that it is a world itself, and therefore it tries to possess as much as possible from that outer world. But both the ego and the world are merely manifestations of *Maya*, and both disappear when the sun of the Self arises in man, and lights up the darkest corners of his ego, chasing this grim shadow away forever. Then the consciousness of the ego ($P + F + T$ from our equations) begins to diminish and the awareness (A) grows proportionally. (See the basic equations already given in this chapter.)

The ego is the only source of evil, and no evil is possible without it. Consequently, ego is also the source of punishment for evil, that is, suffering in all its innumerable forms.

On the other hand, the egoless life, says Maharshi, is the only sure and perennial source of bliss, because when the ego disappears, all evil goes with it. Then there can no longer be any place for suffering. The power of discrimination, based on the *Vichara*, is astonishing even in the world of relativity: when you are in trouble and cannot see any solution of a tangled situation, ask yourself: *"Who is it who is troubled and worried?"* You will see the immediate result, surpassing by far all expectation, if you only put the great inquiry seriously and sincerely.

It seems that the *Vichara* has a mysterious power to evoke the hidden but omnipresent SELF in us, and to LET IT HAVE A WORD.

Another appropriate hint is this: the ego in us has an *instinctive fear* of the Self-inquiry, because it *feels* that *Vichara* in due time will put an end to its illusory life, leaving only the Self to shine forever.

VISIONS

There are no visions in Realization. For the duality (the seer and the seen) is then melted into Oneness. The I and you conception is buried forever: it could only exist as long as there is a separate mind. But Self-Realization means that the mind is destroyed, abandoned as an instrument of cognition.

Instead of it, we have the mindless knowledge, which has no limits and no space.

If one has some visions it is only a proof that one's *Samadhi* still belongs to the inferior, mental type, *Vikalpa* or *Saguna* (with forms). The number of such visions is unlimited, as unlimited as the vibrations in one's mind. There is not and there cannot be any truth in such visions, no matter how exalted they might appear to be to us. The pursuit of visions is one more proof of the spiritual unripeness of a man. Sri Maharshi always strongly warned us against all kinds of visions, as well as against attachments to them, often entertained by unwise seekers.

There is no such thing as uniformity of visions, whether they be astral or mental ones. Everyone sees through his own apparatus of cognition: through his own colored glasses. The same things on other planes of existence would look different when seen by other observers.

Advanced individuals do not occupy themselves with the neighboring planes (astromental, etc.).

They seek the unchanging, white, undifferentiated Light, and not artificially colored visions or apparitions that have no reality in themselves, but only in our imperfect instruments of perception.

All shells are equally unreal, whether they belong to humans, or inhabitants of other worlds. Knowing this, one is closer to the peace of the unchanging Silence.

YOGIS AND SAINTS

They may be more advanced than many of us, but they are not by any means infallible. Their knowledge and virtues are still limited ac-

cording to their degrees of development. They cannot serve us as the *Masters* do. One can easily detect their imperfect state by analyzing their behavior, teachings, and theories. Usually they are strongly sectarian and firm believers in their particular paths, a sure pointer to the various systems of Yoga or denominations to which they are attached.

They have not the fulness of sight of the true Master (Jivanmukta or Rishi): furthermore, the ego of Yogis and many minor Saints is not completely destroyed. They may like adoration and honors, while some even accept gifts and services rendered to them by their devotees.

They often believe in organizations, and try to run their own *ashrams*. Sometimes there is a competitive feeling between them, and some are jealous of others, who disagree with them or are more advanced than they and who therefore do not tolerate their sectarian views.

Sri Maharshi expressly warned us against the selection of an untrue Master. He simply referred to them as being still in ignorance, to a greater or lesser degree.

All this means that every earnest seeker should turn for instruction and Grace (BOTH ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY), only to the true Master-Sage, who alone possesses the fulness of wisdom and experience.

It is true that they are few, very few, those Masters. And they are not too easy to find, especially in this materialistic age.

But "when the disciple is ripe, the Master immediately appears." There is no fear of being overlooked. Only unripe ones look for a substitute for the Master, preparing disappointments and frustration for themselves.

THE WORLD

To the Master the physical world of phenomena is unreal. Reality to a philosphically minded person means stability and permanency. These qualities are definitely lacked by the world. If someone maintains that physical objects are real, the Master might reply that a match, for example, cannot be truly real because after being burned out it definitely ceases to exist as before. So are all visible things, from a simple match to the farthest planets and universes. The most striking example is our own body, so short-lived and fragile, and conditioned in its ephemeral existence.

The Maharshi told us: "There is no alternative for you but to accept the world as unreal, if you are seeking Truth and Truth alone. The simple reason being that unless you give up the idea of the world being real, your mind will always be seeking it. If you take the illusion to be real, then you will never know the Real Itself, although it is the REAL ALONE that exists."

The world is real only to our five physical, that is, mortal senses. To advanced persons it is utterly nonexistent. In *Samadhi* there is intense awareness of Being, but there is no idea or vision of the world.

So, with the expansion of consciousness in man, the outer world disappears of itself. Who, possessing even a moderate sense of reason, would accept such a fleeting world as real?

If the world were real, then one would have no chance of escape from its cruel jaws. We could not exist before our birth and would not exist after our death. All virtues would be only a dream or fantasy, and *no moral standard would then exist.* For, *what meaning would anything have which does not survive the grave?* The same annihilation would befall the good and evil ones, the wise and the foolish.

There are a number of very different worlds, interpenetrating each other, and nonperceptible to the five human senses, in the same way as our material world is nonexistent to inhabitants of those others. All are unreal, in spite of their possible subtlety and apparent advancement in comparison with our own planet-world.

Being only perishable shells, they are necessarily limited in time and space, although both of these when applied to the other worlds might have quite a different meaning and extension. Mathematicians already speak about worlds having more dimensions than the three on our earth.

Sri Maharshi tells us that "to seek knowledge of all these manifestations in space and time is the same, as a person who recently had his hair cut, to think and brood about the fate of each separate hair and its future."

Even astronomers know that the planets and great suns appear and disappear in the depths of the infinite sky-space, suddenly disintegrating and passing into nonexistence: at least, for our physical eyes. But nothing happens to the rest of the universe, which continues to exist, although in different combinations of matter.

GOOD AND EVIL

Both are attributes, and therefore both are unreal. What is good for one might be evil for another. The same medicine that helps one sick person will kill another. Sugar is necessary for an athlete, but it would harm a diabetic.

The SUPREME has no attributes. And just in this absence of attributes lies the secret of ITS infinite perfection.

The Master tells us that "Good and evil are equally to be avoided" and such was his instruction to his disciples. These attributes are parts of imperfection, just as bright and dark colors are unavoidable in every picture.

But men usually strive after that which they believe to be "good" for them, which often turns out to be merely pleasant. From this arises action and consequently reaction. In occultism this is called *Karma*, a good or evil one. Both sorts bind a man. They necessitate temporary material existence, which cannot be composed only of good or only of evil. It is always mixed.

Different plants sprout up from the soil, according to whichever seeds were sown in it. The Sage does not sow at all: for he knows the illusion and its descendent, suffering.

In the meantime, for the average man the question is somewhat different: he has too many burdens, inherited from the far off past, which he cannot so easily and instantly renounce. And so he is instructed by the scriptures to create good and avoid evil, thereby increasing his credit account and diminishing his debts.

This may give him more good opportunities to be happy, although only in time and space, which will finally bring him to the edge of the ultimate discrimination. Only then will he accept the point of view of the Sage, as mentioned above.

The cessation of evil-doing automatically brings out the ability to do good. When *the first* becomes utterly impossible, *the second* will eventually disappear in the glory of spiritualized Consciousness, forever free and blissful. The highest spiritual experience may be compared with the vision of the eternally unchangeable, all-penetrating Light.

INITIATION

The Maharshi recognized as the highest form of initiation that given by the Guru in Silence. For then the consciousness of the Perfect Man is attuned to that of the disciple, and this happens only on the highest level, far beyond all speech and sight.

By this fact he explained his own reluctance to act as a preacher. We can find many explanatory passages in the books containing his authentic sayings. It may be sufficient here to underline that the ability of silent communication with the Master is the peak of the disciple's attainment.

True initiation can never be expressed in words. It simply means the transformation of a man, and not any secrets whispered in one's ear or put on paper. It is closer to the idea of vaccination. Therefore initiation is only ONE, and there cannot be any false initiation, but only the ABSENCE of the true one.

But we might still be anxious to know; even in our clumsy language of the mind, WHAT is the true initiation, or at least, its approximate idea.

Knowing the impossibility of being exact, it can only be said that the only true initiation gives the knowledge of one's own Being, and its relation to the Whole. This relation is invariably conceived of as union with the Whole.

The Master often spoke of the transformation that the association with a Guru can produce in a man who is striving to be liberated from the ties of the unreal. He told us that this association is *a condition* for true initiation. It is impossible to get it through books or by talking with men who are not Masters.

Communion with the Master does not necessarily imply his physical presence. Many have been initiated through their devotion to the Master, whom they never saw physically. He is not a body, as was so often stated by the Maharshi. So his most active part is free from bodily ties, and that is why a man can communicate perfectly with his Master without any material links.

In fact, the spiritual oneness is the only permanent thing that cannot be destroyed by birth or death. We cannot obtain any initiation *unless we have love for the Master.*

Love for Him is already an important step to initiation, which invariably follows after the stage of love.

ENTERING ON THE PATH

This is a most burning question for most seekers of spiritual truth. Accordingly, the Master gave us many invaluable injunctions in this matter. Firstly he said: "*Accept in practice what you accept in theory.*" A short but fateful statement. It hardly needs any explanation. Our sickness is not any lack of knowledge of *how we should proceed*, but just the *inability to do* what was ordered by the Master or simply forgetting the necessity to follow the Path.

It is very similar to drinkers and smokers, who may perfectly realize that these habits are harmful to their bodies, and that physical suffering may take its revenge at the end for their indulgence. But they usually lack a shred of will power sufficient to break these habits.

On the Path, not only such primitive habits must be abandoned but plenty of others as well, the majority of which do not belong to the physical realm. It is impossible, according to the teachings of Sri Ramana, to eradicate them one after another without, at the same time, engaging oneself in the inner search for the Highest—man's real Self.

Moreover, the true search for the Inner Reality of itself puts an end to one's errors and habits.

Why? For then the aims and strivings are radically changed, and man simply has no time or desire to occupy himself with silly things.

Apart from the above, a mysterious Power comes to the rescue of the sincere aspirant; it is a peculiar magnetism, enclosed in meditations, when they follow the lines shown by the Master. The immense power that he radiated while he was engaged in his continuous meditations was, and is, not wasted. It remains forever associated with the Current of the Path (the I Current).

Technicalities do not belong to this present book, but it can be briefly mentioned that the creation of useful habits is the root of every success. To begin any day with meditation and reading of even a few lines of spiritually inspiring lectures and to close one's eyes before doing the same in the evening will bring quick results.

Sri Maharshi told us that the *darshan* (presence or vision) of the

Master is itself a potent means to direct the consciousness of the aspirant. Those who had this *darshan* when he was still in his physical form were lucky indeed. But the Master did something else for us: he left us his permanent kind of *darshan*, in the form of his pictures. The writer has witnessed some photographs being taken of Sri Maharshi. Undoubtedly, the Master mysteriously participated in the proceedings, for at these moments his face used to assume a peculiar expression, which was transmitted to the film, and therefore to the subsequent pictures. It is beyond doubt that the Master, before leaving this earth, wished to do as much as possible for his future pupils, whose *Karma* did not allow them to come to his feet in time.

So, one of the mystical forms of entering on the Path of Self-Realization as taught by the Maharshi is to expose ourselves to his *darshan* as perpetuated in his pictures.

Often, after such an experiment, love immediately arises in the heart of the aspirant. When there is love, the Master will follow, and in such case the writer has nothing else to add.

Another way of entering on the Path is to surrender to the Master. To those who were, and are, unable to follow immediately the path of the *Vichara* with all its strenuous efforts, Sri Ramana said: "Surrender to the Master (or to God) all your being, renounce your own egoistical will, and I will do the rest."

The powerful magnetism of such a directed will surely overthrows all obstacles, since the Master is ever watchful over us. Some entered the Path directly by their intuitional attachment to the *Vichara* (Self-inquiry). Some others saw the Path as if in a lightning flash, and from that moment there was no retreat for them. On the Path there are also some occultists who have realized the sterility of their former studies and efforts, devoid of any proper guidance, and who have been able to discover wherein lies the solution to their lifelong search. Full success has been won by those who, with the practical use of the Master's teachings, surrendered their egos to him and so left all anxiety and sorrow to their true source, thereby freeing themselves for the sublime flight.

But in every case one thing is most essential: to forget all former theories and relative knowledge, that is, to reject former ignorance. Those who will try to reconcile their past errings with the new Direct Path, uncompromising as it is, must remember the words of Christ: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: otherwise the wine

will burst the bottles, and both the wine will be spilled, and the bottles will be lost. . . ."

EVOLUTION

There is no such thing as evolution of spirit in man. What is eternal, unchangeable, and perfect cannot be subject to any improvement or changes. If it were so, then the Spirit-Self would be imperfect in time, which is nonsense.

Instead, we have to go through the gradual emergence from our shrouds of matter, which compel us to mistake illusion for Truth and the perishable for the Real.

It would be in vain to search for the cause of this state of things: the answer lies far beyond our mental consciousness, and cannot be expressed in words. Only the Whole, the Universal Self, KNOWS it. To become consciously that Self, the only thing which really exists, is the sole way to ultimate knowledge.

There is no other Path. Anyway, those who performed the magnificent task have no questions at all. The Silent Wisdom rests in them, and no trouble can ever approach IT.

The process of apparent evolution in the realm of nature is only illusory; it belongs to *Maya*. If we look attentively into the processes of nature, we will invariably see that evolution is not considered to be a kind of progress, but only as a change of forms, which are by no means any better today than they were yesterday. It is only human imagination that makes us think so, according to our ignorance of the ultimate causes and results of the visible universe.

If we cannot easily accept the foregoing, let us have a mental picture of the unavoidable end of all these evolutions on planets and other forms of manifestation: a total disintegration and disappearing, which awaits each material form. On our own planet and in this infinitesimally short period of its recorded history—a few thousand revolutions performed by this tiny speck, our earth, round the sun—many civilizations, nations, and languages have appeared and disappeared forever. All of them possessed things that we do not have as yet, while we have many that were unknown to the past.

THE OPERATOR IS CHANGING HIS FILMS IN WHICH WE PLAY OUR LITTLE ROLES.

XIX

The Achievement

On the Direct Path as shown by Sri Maharshi, one fact or condition is of paramount importance. The disciple must realize that contemplation of a glass of water will not quench his thirst. He has to drink that water. So it is a state of consciousness that must be achieved. Its mere description will not lead us to discovery of the Truth.

In the present state of things, what passes as official Western philosophy leads us only to guess at the Truth. Food has to be eaten and assimilated, not merely looked at.

A great Master once said that the idea of infinite space gives us a hint of what the consciousness of a liberated one is, formless, indestructible, independent, self-sufficient Being, exempt from all limitations and attachments and therefore merged in the infinite bliss of pure and unconditioned Being. This is the supreme aim.

If someone tells us that, of course, he understands these remarks and recognizes the truth of them, but in the meantime he has to fulfill something different until he comes to the aim, this is only a proof that such a person did not actually see any ray of Truth at all. Because one who sees cannot then pursue anything but the ultimate goal, the discovery of the Truth in himself and therefore the universal truth of all Being. All excuses are only futile.

From this point of view the famous saying of Sri Maharshi (quoted in the book *Maha Yoga*) about the "day of laughter" becomes clearer, that is, that the infinite and unimaginable simplicity of pure Being, *when attained*, makes one laugh at all one's previous searches, deceptions, sorrows, and problems, born from basic ignorance of this Ultimate Truth.

May this great day of laughter illumine us all. This day will come for everyone. Of course, I am not speaking here from the viewpoint of

any one single, actual existence. Some, perhaps only a very few, will find it while still in this earthly life. For the others, eternity will serve for time is unlimited. Remember Maharshi's previously mentioned simile about the different kinds of fuel.

This day is also the "day of joy" as promised to the righteous and the saintly, by the Western Teacher. This is the "heaven" of all religions, though their very naïve conceptions may appear to us as childish. A disciple always prefers a simple definition by his Master: "When you know who you are, there will no longer be any more questions and uncertainties."

Sri Maharshi also says, and I quoted it as the first motto in *In Days of Great Peace*: "Charity, Penance, Sacrifice, Duty, Yoga, Devotion, the Expanse of Consciousness, the Substance, Peace, the Truth, Grace, Silence, the supreme State, the deathless Death, Knowledge, Renunciation, Liberation and Bliss, know that all these are synonymous with the severance of the 'body-am-I' Consciousness."

XX

Maha Yoga and Its Value for the World

Everyone interested in occultism and spiritual development has probably read many books on these subjects. When studying modern literature about Yoga and Eastern occult philosophy, one thing becomes clear beyond all doubt, and that is, that the number of publications about such matters is large and steadily growing. One Yogi after another tries to express his own theories, mixed with innumerable instructions, exercises, and beliefs. In particular, I am referring to some recently published series of books, but it is not necessary to name the authors, for if desired, interested readers can find these out for themselves.

In India, the birthplace of Yoga, there are hundreds of well-known authors and thousands more minor exponents of its various forms. Sometimes they are in sharp opposition to one another, each thinking that

his conceptions are necessarily the best. But for the thoughtful investigator questions arise: Why is this so? And just where does lie the naked truth of spiritual achievement, which can lead a man directly to his perennial goal: the deathless Existence, the true Life, about which have spoken all the Great Teachers of humanity. The very multiplicity of the expositions on Yoga and the various treatises written by the different interpreters of the ONCE "Secret Wisdom" are the best proof that in not one of them can be found the fulness of Truth. Also, the highly complicated "teachings" of many contemporary Yogis is another doubtful point that I wish to stress.

Surely every reasonable student of any branch of human knowledge will agree that the measure of a subject is its practical application, that is, the possibility of realizing and using that knowledge. In spiritual endeavors this quality is of overwhelming importance. Of what use would it be for us to know and memorize—which of course is impossible—all the scriptures, teachings, and theories of different occult schools and Yoga, if we could not possibly put even the smallest part of them into practice, thereby making use of them in this life or some other? You cannot take any of your acquired book-knowledge to the grave. For after all, will not your memory be destroyed along with the decaying brain? In this physical life we should remember the hard fact that a highly intelligent man such as a scientist or scholar will be transformed into an idiot, if certain parts of his brain are damaged or affected by a destructive illness. This means that all our physically acquired qualities are dependent upon the bodily organs to which they correspond.

Now, what remains of our knowledge when the whole physical apparatus is destroyed by the so-called death, which is common to all of us? The *Advaita*—the highest and noblest expression of Vedanta, which is supported by a chain of great Initiates or Indian Rishis—tells us that the mind-brain consciousness is mortal and impermanent, and not an eternal state.

All objective knowledge, memory, and the rest of the mental baggage superimposed on us during the short period of a single so-called incarnation or physical life on this or another planet cannot be taken by us to the other side. The imperishable in man lies elsewhere. It is his (usually undeveloped) subjective consciousness of Being, independent of time, space, and all conditions of the manifested world. This peren-

nial man-consciousness has different names. For example, we hear about the soul in the Christian world; about the *Atman* in Vedanta; and in the latest revelation of the latter by Sri Ramana Maharshi it is called, simply and scientifically, the Self.

This Self-Consciousness of the Spirit, *Atman*, God, or Self is the only reality and the only goal that has to be reached, and that never again will be lost by the fortunate one who discovers it in himself. It is the treasure that cannot be stolen or spent. It is the solution of the eternal question put before man: WHO AM I?

Now, let us look at the different ways offered to us by the numerous theories of occultism or its Eastern counterpart, certain forms of Yoga. It is not my purpose to enumerate all of them here, for that would require another unnecessary series of books. My aim is to extract the principal idea behind all of them and to expose it to a short but merciless examination.

Are you able to follow, in the present normal conditions of your life whether Western or Eastern, any of these expositions in full, for a mere dabbling means nothing? Some of them are only ethical treatises giving us a few not too definite hints about the Path to Perfection in man, while others consist mainly of the author's own complex mental deliberations providing no method that could be practiced by an earnest aspirant. These will not be discussed in this chapter.

But there are many other books that promise "to lead us from the very beginning to the glorious end," that is, full attainment. They offer us definite methods that are described in the afore-mentioned recently published works. Some of the authors are still living and the contents of the books are closely connected with the writer's surroundings. Undoubtedly, many of them are good and even saintly men full of the best of intentions, which are measured according to their own limited understanding of the needs of people belonging to quite different cultures and civilizations.

Of course, their efforts cannot in any way be sufficiently adequate to lead the rest of humanity in accordance with their own standard, which is, as they so often claim, the "spiritual awakening." Take any one of these books filled with the instructions and methods belonging to the particular path beloved by the author. Were you able really to fulfil even a fragment of it in your everyday life? Did you wonder how many human lifetimes would be necessary to change your nature in

accordance with the pattern given in such a work? It would hardly be possible to carry out the instructions sincerely and in full while knowing that in this kind of work there is no room for any bungling or laxity. Such precepts must be performed exactly as given.

Now, if you have not been born in the same country and conditions as the author, how can you adopt the mode of life, favorable to him, which belongs to a totally different culture and set of customs? Such an author can dedicate his whole life, or at least the major portion of it, to transcendental studies, which are often referred to as spiritual. Your innumerable questions do not even exist for him.

In India, for example, you can meditate almost anywhere, and no one will regard you with an unfriendly or suspicious eye. When I was in that country, I could sit and merge myself in meditation in any place, beside a highroad, while resting in a forest, or on the steps of a temple, no matter whether it was in use or in ruins. And I did nothing beyond trying to live a spiritual life, without giving a thought to the material side of my existence. All of this would be unpractical in a Western country. In the East, the holy men often wander throughout their lands, supported by the pious citizens who still uphold the ancient traditions. But in most Western countries such men, because they lack the proper means of support, would be tried and convicted for vagrancy.

If, instead of repeating *mantras* and performing lonely meditations, one is compelled to work eight or more hours daily and lead a complicated Western life, how can one limit possessions to a solitary loincloth? And how can one fulfil all the instructions and methods designed for an utterly different pattern of life?

The sensible reader will understand that true spiritual instruction must be independent of all outer conditions, for it must fit in with every way of life. In other words, the two completely different lives, material and spiritual, should not interfere with one another. And so the teaching of a true Master MUST NECESSARILY PRODUCE HARMONY BETWEEN THE TWO or otherwise it becomes merely a curiosity providing impracticable reading.

Having this standard firmly in mind, we are in a better position to appreciate and follow any true spiritual Master who brings his message into the world in our own epoch.

The mere reading of even the best of instructions leads us nowhere, unless we are able to realize them for ourselves. They must necessarily

be lived and practiced. Moreover, in the majority of occult and yogic books you will find that, even before you take your first steps on the Path, it will be compulsory to acquire certain qualities and virtues in advance. You must become good, filled with compassion, chaste, detached, full of love, ready to help in every way, and many others.

At the same time, an ability to concentrate the mind, to exclude all unwanted thoughts from it, to impose peace on it, all this must be done beforehand. And still men do not know the true goal, for the sake of which they have to perform so many purifications. From such come the incredibly great number of those who are failures on the occult and yogic paths. It would be of little harm if disappointment simply led to the leaving of the unsuitable way of development; but often the results are not so easily overcome. Men become cynical and negatively minded toward everything connected with spirituality, believing it all to be a hoax.

Faced by a multitude of instructions and complicated exercises, one is simply drowned in them, and is not in a position to undertake any systematic and successful work. Moreover, a conviction might arise that these precepts have been created only by the human mind and have not necessarily had their source in true spiritual initiation, which, as all eminent Sages teach, must be as simple as Truth itself.

The *Atman*, Self, God, Truth: these four names are synonymous and cannot mean something complicated or manifold. All the scriptures and Teachers state that the Reality (another synonym for the other four) is absolutely homogeneous, all-pervading, unique and undivided, simplicity itself. So the Path to It cannot be a denial of It. This means that the qualities of the ultimate goal cannot be opposed to the means used. The merging in endless complications only leads one astray. Those who have reached the consciousness of *Samadhi* say that in that sublime state all the differences are overcome and no longer exist, for there is only the unique Light of the all-pervading Consciousness, which may be called Self, Nirvana, or Cosmic Consciousness; the title is unimportant.

Among the multiplicity of teachings and systems there is one that does not possess any of the weaknesses of those already discussed. It is *logical* and *scientific* from every aspect. It is quite independent of race, culture, social position, and even education of the aspirant. Things that are often obstacles when dealing with the various systems of Yoga are

immaterial to the latest revelation of Truth, given to us by the Great Rishi in our own era.

For the study and practice of his teachings, only *one condition* is important and essential. Man must already possess, to a certain extent, a germ of the spiritual Consciousness, even though it is still buried deep beneath the layers of his outer worldly conceptions. It means that one must intuitionally recognize a higher existence than our selfish, egotistical physical life. If this germ really begins to manifest itself in man, he may be ready for the Direct Path, also called *Maha Yoga*, the Highest Yoga or Path of Self-Realization, AS TAUGHT BY THE MAHARSHI.

Till fifty years ago, when in a little known part of Southern India a young Sage began his powerful spiritual radiation, the four synonymous terms previously given were almost unknown among occultists and seekers of Truth. And today, although the earthly life of the Maharshi has been extinguished, the human search seems unavoidably to follow the pattern he has already laid down. For such a Sage does not copyright his revelation. His constant meditations have created many currents in the world, which unconsciously conform to his teachings. We need only to look at the numerous societies and organizations which, even without knowing anything or very little about the Great Rishi, use *his methods*, at least partially, even though not mentioning his name.

It became evident in this time of innumerable sects, religions, and philosophic and occult systems that a synthesis was urgently needed that could explain the *one basis* of them all, and at the same time infinitely transcend them. Indian Yogi, Muslim haji, Christian devotee, religionless occultist, nameless seeker of God or Truth, farmer, minister, engineer, sailor, merchant, for one and all of these men a unifying message had to be created: one that did not deny their former creeds but gave them a common luminous ideal whose peak could not be transcended by any previous theories and conceptions. It had to be something *common to each man*, referring to the immortal core of his life, beyond all racial and social differences, his unique and real treasure. And the Maharshi did just this. He came to us in the midst of our twentieth-century materialism with its breath-taking discoveries and inventions. He did not condemn any of them. He was not a religious leader whose role is limited to a few generations of men, but all re-

ligious truths became clear and understandable in the light of his revelation. He seldom spoke about God, pointing out that men should know themselves, who they are, before they can be in a position to realize the state of Infinite Being, the Absolute, which they call God.

Not all Masters have put their spiritual messages on such a scientific basis. *Maha Yoga* gives us a definite condition under which the truth of existence can be reached: it is the knowledge of man's own Self. "To see God is to be God," said the Sage, and therein lies the solution of the eternal equation of the Supreme Being. Man cannot possibly see or know Him objectively as something separate from himself, and that is why all seeking, when wrongly based cannot be successful.

The *Maha Yoga* (the Great Yoga) has a firm foundation, which is the true Self-knowledge in man. The tragedy and suffering of individuals and of humanity as a whole has as an invariable cause, the lack of just this knowledge. Not knowing who they are, men seek after false happiness. This state the Master calls ignorance. From it arise all the sufferings and evils that afflict us. The innumerable fallacies that men take to be goals in their lives are like the mirage of the desert: the traveler who unwisely follows these illusory visions suffers and often perishes. These false aims create wrong actions, which are directed to satisfying the illusions. The Master tells us that in all human wrongdoing, misery, and suffering we can always find a basic cause, the wrong conception, that man is his body and all the desires connected with it.

If we analyzed each crime we would invariably find that the criminal wanted something closely connected with his ego-body. Money, luxury, passions, hatreds, jealousy, fears, and countless similar things are impossible when a man refuses to believe that he is the body. Feeling this way, his aims in life are immediately transformed and raised far above the former temporary greed. There is no need to quote examples: having the formula, everyone can substitute the desired values.

Furthermore, we can see that our present imperfect manifestation, that is, ego or personality, composed of body, mind, and emotions, is a highly complicated thing. And all egos (if we consider only those on this earth) are apparently different from each other. Returning to our true home, the level of consciousness of the all-pervading Self, we become united with the Whole, undivided and infinite, without qualities and beyond all differentiation. It is very evident that the way to unity should not be based on any conception of a multiple and separate

physical being, but rather on the process of the *final synthesis* leading to the *ultimate simplicity* of the *unconditioned Being*. Of course, the full realization of this idea lies beyond the level of the mind; it must be experienced in that state of consciousness where all thoughts cease to exist and the Being contemplates itself apart from all manifested forms. For these forms are just the veils that shadow the full Light in us.

For those who "know" what it means, the thing is extremely simple. The Master Maharshi always said that the most perfect speech that gives the true initiation is the Silence. And so they merge in it and in so doing they know all.

All this means that the aim is the development of the Central Consciousness (Self) or the *Atman* in man. Properly speaking, it is not a creation, but only an UNVEILING of THAT which is always present in man.

The unveiling of the *Atman* is accompanied by all the virtues and qualities carefully enumerated in the scriptures of all religions and in some Indian treatises on occult philosophy. The Central Light in us will enlighten all problems no matter what the conditions and at the same time answer all questions forever.

This is the *essence of the Maha Yoga* as given to us by the Master Ramana Maharshi. And surprisingly, this Direct Path ignores all artificial theories and does not demand of its followers any seclusion, cumbersome body postures, fasts, or any other special conditions of the outer life. Therefore it is accessible to every mature soul no matter whether born in Europe, Asia, or elsewhere, or whether an engineer, peasant, priest, sailor, swami, or a mulla. This sublime Path teaches us how to take our first steps on it when seeking our legitimate inheritance, the bliss of the union with the Self, Whole, God. There are cases where well-advanced persons are not even known as Yogis or Saints for they apparently live "normal" human lives. It is the inner spiritual effort, discipline, and achievement of the consciousness of the Self called "Self-Realization" alone that counts. The Great Rishi Ramana who opened this wonderful new Path for mankind had a message for contemporary humanity and therefore he expressed it in an outer form suitable for us. There are no mysteries or hidden teachings. The gist of the *Maha Yoga* is the knowledge of the eternal element in man, or *THAT which does not die or suffer*, being eternal bliss, wisdom, and

peace. Where can one find anything more true or beautiful? While fulfilling his everyday duties, man, at the same time, can perform the highest training of himself, through the Self-inquiry or *Vichara*, that is, the question "Who Am I?" It substitutes all the various ineffective exercises because the disciple is conscious right from the very beginning of the goal that sooner or later must be achieved, for there are no others beyond it. Instead of artificial and therefore only temporary methods of concentration and creation of so-called virtues, he simply becomes conscious of WHO HE IS, and this wisdom gives him everything. As Christ said: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

So those who have been disappointed by the unreality and lack of practical application of their former ways of inner development *need not be so any more*; for there is a rare and sublime Path, supported by the personal example of a Great Teacher among the people of the twentieth century. For a sincere seeker devoted to the Truth and not to *cumbersone experiences*, which are only another form of illusion (*Maya*) and cannot go beyond the grave, there is no longer any need to roam unknown paths.

The doctrine of Self-Realization has been expounded in English in *Maha Yoga* by Who, while some practical uses of it have been described in *In Days of Great Peace*.

According to Indian scriptures, one of the cardinal virtues and qualities of a perfect Master is invariably full *nonattachment*. The Perfect Man, such as was Maharshi, has no worries or worldly longings. He does not advertise himself, being far above any personal life and its ambitions. Because such a Man knows everything, he does not try to attract any disciples, for ripe ones come without any urging, while the unripe simply do not understand the teaching and greatness of the Master. But how differently others act!

Despite the fact that the Maharshi passed away physically a few years ago and apparently cannot control the numerous writings about him as he did during his lifetime, there are still no superficial, foolish, or *tasteless* expressions and pet names applied to him, as unfortunately happens with some Yogis and Saints who pose as world-teachers at the present time.

The Maharshi almost never even used the personal pronouns I and

mine, and so on. Teaching us to discard our perishable egos (personalities), he set the supreme example in himself. He refused all honors and did not accept gifts in any form.

Also, the organization of the life round him in the *Ashram* and elsewhere was of no importance for the Sage. He never concerned himself with worldly affairs. He accepted the *Ashram* that grew up around him as a necessary evil, knowing as he himself said that wherever he went people would follow and build their homes where he stayed. Some felt that he was like a prisoner in the *Ashram*. His spirituality was revealed even more clearly and without any compromise a few days before his death, when, asked about the possibility of a cure for his dreadful disease, he replied almost smiling: "The body itself is a disease."

The spiritual hunger of humanity is growing with every year. Elderly persons who can remember back fifty years will recall that, in the beginning of this century, the number of occult, mystic, and religious organizations—apart from the then existing and long-established churches —was insignificant when compared with today. The penetration of Eastern occultism into wider Western circles was then only just beginning. Swami Vivekananda, an eminent disciple of the Indian Yogi and Saint, Sri Ramakrishna, had just started his world-wide travels and his excellent lectures were first given in the United States of America at the World Religious Congress. The first books of Yogi Ramacharaka (W. W. Atkinson of the U.S.A.) found their way into the Western world and gave an exceptionally clear and inspired picture of Eastern occultism. In spite of their wide popularity, the works of Ramacharaka are still not adequately appreciated in the West. He was one of the few authors on mysticism who had the admirable ability of selecting the most elevated and suitable portions of the ancient teachings of India and expounding them with the utmost clarity, and understanding of the needs of his countrymen. At the same time, he removed from the secrets of Eastern occultism all that could be harmful for students deprived of a genuine *Guru* (Master) who alone can control the psychical development of the aspirant. There was another, less well-known author, Dr. Brandler-Pracht, who was an eminent German savant. His unique book, *Spiritual Education* (*The Culture of the Spirit in Man*), now forgotten in Europe, gives an unusual number of classified in-

structions invaluable for an intelligent and strong-willed student. However, his writings are not devoid of some degree of danger, for he describes in open language things from the realm of practical occultism that could be misunderstood, and therefore misused by some persons who are not free from the main human vices. He gives full directions for certain astral experiences, which, while extraordinary and fascinating, are not essential for any spiritual progress. Nevertheless, they can give to the aspirant a firm and experimentally proved conviction of the possibility of an existence apart from the physical body, using other more subtle vehicles of consciousness.

There cannot be any doubt that humanity is feverishly searching for new ideals and a justification for its present existence. Terrible scourges, previously unknown, in the form of wars, revolutions, unrest, and social cataclysms tear at human life. Men are seeking solutions in reforms, changes in the form of governments, in propaganda for newly created sects, the defining of new boundaries between countries, technical progress, and so on. These attempts fail because they prove to be only palliatives and not cures.

If we multiply a certain unit by a figure, no matter how large it may be, the result will always be expressed in the same units. This means that the multiplication of, say, a match will give us only the same matches and not rabbits or trees. For an analytical mind this example is of great importance, for it shows us that the quality depends upon the units used. We can arrange millions of matches as we wish, but there will always be nothing more than a collection of the same matches, for the quantity does not alter the quality.

The perfecting of humanity cannot be achieved by merely shuffling it into this or that pattern, that is, into a definite social or political organization. Everything depends upon the quality of the individuals being reorganized. A saintly community (if, of course, such existed) would be little affected by the form of their ruling body; but a community of criminals would not be transformed by even the best form of government until they had been re-educated and were no longer criminals.

All spiritual Teachers of humanity place the whole weight of responsibility upon the individual's perfection and are little interested in anything else, especially in politics. They know full well that no sound building can be erected from faulty materials. When answering a

Westerner's question about the then apparently sad fate of the world (it was just prior to the Second World War), the Sage said quietly: "As you are, so is the world." This short sentence contains an initiation for receptive individuals. If we wish this world to be better, *it is we who must be changed and ameliorated*, not our outer appearances.

Maha Yoga puts an end to the beliefs, so flourishing in these days, that insist that allegiance to one or another of the innumerable sects, religions, or political organizations will help the world to escape from the present impasse. In the days when India was fighting hard for independence, and loyalty to this fight was considered a necessity for every decent and patriotic Hindu, some persons went to the Sage and asked him: "Should we be patriots?" They probably wished to get approval for their activities from the great spiritual Master. The answer was: "Your first duty is TO BE." The Rishi, himself a Hindu by birth, was by no means perturbed or bound by any physical forms. He pointed out the emptiness of human definitions for BEING, advising us first to discover the true meaning of man (the Self, as we now say), and not to concern ourselves with the outer shell, which is derived from birth, profession, and convictions.

One could say that the *Maha Yoga* might be a religion for far more advanced generations of the future; but if we take the present meaning of the word religion, which in Latin is *a bond*, we will see that it is not so. Also, the word implies an outer organization, which since it consists of an association of men of the same creed is considered to be already little short of the goal of every religion, that is the so-called salvation of man. The conception of God as separate from His creation and dwelling somewhere in a mystical heaven (if not a material one, as in some backward beliefs) is a usual attribute of each religion. But one who has earnestly studied the teachings of the Great Rishi knows that, in reality, things are quite different.

No full exposition of *Maha Yoga* will be given here, since the reader can find it in the already-mentioned books; but it can be said that the gist of the Maharshi's message can be seen from two aspects.

1. To those who are able to investigate their own being through the use of Self-inquiry or *Vichara*, he said: "Ask yourself incessantly who you are. The one who perseveres in *Vichara*, analyzing his

whole being, will find the solution. And this will give him peace and wisdom forever."

2. To those who are unable to work with the mystical Inquiry, the Master has spoken differently: "As you believe in God, so dedicate your whole being to Him, surrender everything to Him including your problems, and you will reach the same goal."

We know from the Maharshi's utterances that he made no essential difference between the two apparently contradictory paths to attainment. And those who are treading the first path come to the inner knowledge that at the end they too will have to surrender themselves as in the second.

What is the secret of this apparent paradox? Who is the man who undertakes to wander the path of *Vichara*? Who is that God? Who seeks and to whom does he surrender himself, this adept of the second aspect of the Path?

According to the revelation of the Great Rishi, man is none other than the Spirit, Self, although he thinks differently until he learns the Truth. The Master also says: "There is no other God than the Self," the all-pervading Consciousness of the Universal Self. Then whether we are seeking Him—the One—*on the way to inner Wisdom*, by analyzing our entire being with the use of the *Vichara*, or whether we simply *recognize the fact of His unique existence*, seeking union with Him, the only Reality, the result will be the same. As each river, no matter if it flows through plains or down from steep hills, must give up its waters to the ocean, so every spark of Consciousness will merge in its source, the Self or the Whole.

As we can now see, the revelation of the Maharshi cannot properly be called a religion; but at the same time we cannot find in it anything that contradicts the *true meaning* of the teachings of former Masters, which men have shaped into religions. Where contradictions seem to occur, they refer only to *the dogmas created by men*, who have tried to mold the spiritual teachings into a stiff form in accordance with their own narrow conceptions. Of course, the spiritual heights of the latest message of Truth have little in common with invented dogmas and beliefs. The two cannot even be contrasted against each other for their

levels are quite incompatible, just as a three-dimensional object cannot be placed within a two-dimensional one.

According to *Maha Yoga*, men do not need to leave their religious beliefs if they are already satisfied with them and especially if these things help them to lead good lives.

That Christian mysticism already knew about such matters is shown by Thomas à Kempis when he says: "Truly, when the day of judgement cometh, it will not be asked of us, what we have read, but what we have done; not what fine discourses we have made, but how like religious men we have lived."

Some people love mystery, strange terms, and unusual forms of exercise, and their interest in the less known religions and mysticism—described in some recently published books—is not usually based on a genuine search for Truth, but stems merely from the restless mind. Curiosity is a basic characteristic of the human mind and is far from being a virtue or a help in the search. For, as we have seen, it is a finite kind of energy and has to be transcended if Realization is ever to be reached. Moreover, not all occult books have been written by true and therefore competent Masters who have full knowledge of the human psyche.

The obvious mark of immature teachings will be an evident effort to CONVERT the reader to a particular religion or related conceptions. Originators of such believe themselves to be equal to or higher than the Great Teachers of the past. If we peruse the sayings of the Great Rishi Ramana about other Teachers, we will see that he fully recognized Their messages and greatness, and never tried to "convert" anyone to the Hindu religion or form of worship. His famous saying is: "All Masters are One!"

In conclusion we can say that the final truth of spiritual achievement lies where its expression is closest to the absolute conception of Life, beyond all conditions and limitations.

This Principle is in every man and some of us become conscious of it. There are souls which seek only the Infinite, and the Absolute alone can quench their spiritual thirst. From the ranks of such, the coming Master chooses His disciples.

The duty of the Master is not finished with his passing away from the

physical body. We know that the teachings of Christ began to flourish centuries after His death, and the greatest Saints of Christianity never saw their Master in His physical form.

The epoch of the latest Teacher, Sri Ramana Maharshi, is too close for us to have any doubt about his existence or the authenticity of his teachings. There are still men living who saw him with their own eyes. And at his place of rest, ancient Tiruvannamalai, visitors can still see the Master's handwriting and all his earthly possessions, a bamboo stick and a water flask.

If you can appreciate his testament, *Maha Yoga*—so magnificent in its simplicity and so unrivaled in brightness—then this Path may be waiting for you.

PART THREE

Chapters XXI-XXIX

Dedicated to the memory of
Paul Sédir

XXI

Egoism

If we take time to analyze ourselves, that is, our normal consciousness of everyday, we will find much in common with other individuals. From the moment of wakening to the last thought before dropping into the unconsciousness of sleep, there is one thing that occupies the center of everyone's consciousness. It is the thought of "I" or what we consider to be I. The rest of the visible world is outside, something added, which enters into a different relationship with our I. Sometimes these relationships are pleasant and sometimes unpleasant to this I, this core of our Being.

Consequently, the states of happiness or unhappiness of this I are dependent upon outside conditions. If everything is according to our wishes, we are happy; if not, then we feel miserable.

In other words, most men live extremely conditioned lives, having no real control over the events in them, not knowing the future and unable to forget the past. Such lives lack stability or security, that supreme state toward which we all strive in different ways, consciously or unconsciously. This is that state "which passeth all understanding," inner peace independent of all outer conditions. The normal human I limited by outer conditions we will call the ego-consciousness or simply the ego, for there are different forms of consciousness and each one needs a term in order to avoid misunderstandings.

The ego is the imaginary center of our normal inner world. We

revolve everything around our ego. If sometimes we wish others to be happy, it is in order that we may be happy ourselves. If we do something kind to those we love, we expect some regard in the form of recognition and appreciation. If we do not get this, we are unhappy and often bitter feelings arise within us. Moreover, the ego possesses that unpleasant quality that we call jealousy. It becomes more intense in the affairs of sexual life. In this most primitive form of human relationship, the exclusiveness of physical possession has some good reason from the biological point of view. Animals, which lead a far more natural life than humans, possess at the time of breeding this instinct of exclusiveness that often leads to fights for the possession of females and so on.

The ego-ridden life is full of troubles. From the individual to the collective beings known as egregors (see chapter of that title in Part 5 of this book), troubles surround man as individuals, as a nation, and as the outer world. These troubles have one common cause, materialistic egoism, individual or collective. As long as the consciousness of man is confined to the ego, troubles are unavoidable.

Is this ego-consciousness the highest we can know? Perhaps some simple examples will be better than complicated explanations, for Truth is ever best conveyed in simple form.

The ego will often sacrifice itself for what appears to it as a greater good. The mother cat will fight to the death to defend her young against any combination of far more powerful enemies. Primitive man fought to protect his family. Scientists and doctors may jeopardize their lives in dangerous experiments to perfect new methods of cure for various diseases and many of them will lay down their apparent greatest good—their physical lives—to find some benefit for the rest of suffering mankind. The ego-life can be sacrificed and this is proof that in each of us there is something beyond the ego, and that deep within our consciousness there exists that of which the majority of men have no clear conception.

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." So said Christ and He Himself gave us the supreme example, and as a result, there arose the mighty egregor of Christianity which led many believers down the centuries to sacrifice their lives, not for visible and tangible good but for a spiritual idea. For they could

have avoided martyrdom if they would have pronounced one thing: their rejection of the Master.

This is mentioned only to show that the ego-consciousness is by no means the highest, or the sole level of the human consciousness and that our efforts to find a higher one are perfectly justified, even from an impersonal point of view.

There is another side of the matter. Are we to think that those who found the highest level of consciousness of the limited ego were unhappy? Were the martyrs who died for their faith, unhappy men? It is worth consideration. Did they not have a brighter light which illuminated their hearts and minds?

So we can state that the so-called normal state of consciousness of man called the ego-centered consciousness, is not the only one nor is it the highest. It cannot give lasting happiness for it is limited to transient life. The physical life which MUST inevitably be destroyed, is the only field of its activity.

Because the ego has no way of controlling the conditions of its life, it is full of trouble. Therefore, for one who is not content to hide his head in the sand, another solution must be found.

This solution exists because it has been found by others. This higher consciousness transcends the limitations of the ego-life giving such bliss, that the consciousness of the lower level appears as does a shadow to the bright light of the sun.

The solution has to be found individually. To belong formally to one religion or another will not of itself suffice. In spite of the illuminating life of the founder of Christianity, there were the persecutions of the Inquisition and various sects. In spite of the great spiritual leaders, the Great Rishis of India, there was and still is slaughter between Moslems and Hindus in their land of the holy Ganges. Political persecutions and crimes against elementary human rights in this twentieth century show the depths to which the ego-ridden life can sink, even in spite of religious teachings.

An interesting legend found in India tells of a wise King who summoned to his court an illustrious sage and asked him to show him what sort of government he should give his people in order to make them happy and avoid troubles and discontent.

The Rishi told the following story: "Many years ago in our country,

there were two rulers. Each one wanted to build an imperishable monument to his own glory. The first built a magnificent temple using marble and all the most expensive building materials. The best architects were engaged, who erected a true masterpiece. The King was satisfied and thought it a worthy remembrance of his power and wisdom.

"The second King sold all his treasures to buy pure gold, which was made into bricks. Of these he built a chapel, small and insignificant in comparison to that of the first King. Not long after came an earthquake and the colossal temple was a mass of ruins and its beautiful form destroyed. The King had no more money with which to rebuild his dream and died sad and disappointed.

"The small chapel of the other King, though also fallen in ruins, lost little of its value for nothing could injure the gold of which it was made. Its rebuilding was a trifle and the wise King was happy and content."

The structure of the world depends upon its components. Bricks of clay have value only according to the impermanent structure of the edifice, but composed of gold will endure for ever.

Sri Maharshi told us that we are not different from the world, nor is the world different from us. The solution of the world's troubles lies in the individual effort and value of each man and woman. At a meeting of representatives of many creeds, each argued passionately about the superiority of their beliefs. Moslems, Hindus, Catholics, Protestants, all were men of good will and supposedly sincere. Each wanted to convince the rest that his creed was most favored by the Almighty.

Different proofs were brought forth to show their superiority over all others, but there was one who took no part in the argument and remained silent. At last he arose and said: "Tell me please, of which creed is God Himself? Christian, Moslem, or Hindu? Did He not create His earth for all of them?" And there was no answer. A long silence followed the fiery discussion.

XXII

Mind and Heart

Those already acquainted to some degree with the teachings and philosophy of Sri Maharshi are often said to be engaged in the search for the supreme good, the immortal bliss of consciousness of the real Self in man. But whilst living in this world many find that the search is hardly compatible with their everyday lives. Then arise many questions that can be answered by the light of the absolute conceptions of the Rishi.

The mind that puts such questions may be satisfied, to a certain extent, so that it becomes less of an obstacle to the inner peace of consciousness, without which any enlargement of that consciousness cannot be achieved. It is true that, when the level of the Eternal Self is reached, there are no more questions. But how many of us achieve that level?

The mind, as says the Maharshi, is neither good nor evil. It is only a form of energy, such as the latent power of a river, which may be left idle, causing erosion of the soil over which it flows, or it can be directed to mills, hydroelectric stations, irrigation of fields, and other useful things. Therefore the same power can be a blessing as well as a damaging factor in its own realm.

The wise will use the power for worthy aims, while the ignorant will only waste it. So, let us be wise rather than unwise.

"The mind must be cold, but the heart must be warm." There lies the solution of all the problems of inner life.

When the mind is controlled, there is a higher Power that performs the work. You are instinctively seeking just that Power. It is useless to try to give it a name, for it is unnecessary. The less words, the better you progress. A cold mind is one that is made to reason instead of acting spontaneously. Like the famous saying of the ancient Romans: *Quid-*

quid agis, prudenter agas et respice finem: Whatever you do, do wisely and consider the end (of your activities).

The highest achievement of such a cold and controlled mind means the understanding of the aim of your present life and its true meaning. Before you reach the summit, the valleys have to be crossed, that is, each moment of your everyday life must be filled with the effort *to see ahead as far as you can.*

There is a sure method that will lead you to the goal: it is the acceptance of the axiom that you and your thinking principle *are two, not one.*

When the captain of a ship is navigating his vessel, he stays far beyond the element on which it sails. He does not hide himself under the waterline, somewhere in the ship's holds, nor does he swim alongside. Such conduct would necessarily appear to you as unreasonable and you would be right. So why do you try to direct your own vessel—the realm of the relentless mind—from under the waves or swimming merged in them?

Think about it, and you may come to some surprising conceptions that will illuminate many things for you, about which your present knowledge is almost negligible.

With that which we call the "heart" it is different. When you are happy, that is, when your heart is warmed by love and happiness, you have an irresistible feeling of expansion or, as some prefer to say, of inner fire. To the warm and therefore happy heart, all the world looks fair: the human faces are gentle, nature is beautiful, and the universe is a garden of bliss. To the cold, egoistic, and therefore unhappy heart things are just the opposite. Everything seems to be against him. The same human faces are now dull; only their hostility (imaginary or even real) is seen. There is a morbid feeling that the man is alone and enclosed in his pitiful cage of flesh, subdued by all its miseries and dangers.

The two processes in our consciousness briefly described above are the inner processes of that consciousness, although their results may be quite visible even to the physical eye. This causes people to try to classify their neighbors according to outward appearances.

A warm heart does not mean that a man wishes to embrace everyone and everything, thereby expressing his feelings in a stupid way; quite the opposite. If he does possess the necessary cold mind, he avoids all cheap display of elation. That is subconscious and right. But in the eyes of one happy enough to possess these two wonderful and indispensable

qualities, you will see outer dignity coupled with inner warmth. You will revere such a person.

In his true Master, a disciple sees the highest state of harmony. This harmony, eternal and uninterrupted, was just what I saw in the Maharshi. It was only later that the magnet began to polarize the formless piece of iron. And it was then that I came to realize the causes and the full meaning of such harmony.

In your daily life the rule of the "cold mind and warm heart" would appear to be extremely useful, and you will find the proof of this in every action, where before was only darkness and distortion. You may ask: "How can I attain both of them?" These are *inner* and not *outer* qualities as you will surely accept. So do not try to attain them by means of something outside yourself. No matter how sympathetically a man may be disposed toward you, he cannot digest your food for you. It is beyond his capabilities. We can give food and place it on a suitable dish, but if you refuse to eat and digest it, who is to blame?

When you do so, you remain hungry and weak.

So, digest spiritual food when it is offered to you, and from that food build on that which arises from it, your own imperishable spirituality.

All else will pass and leave you in darkness for eons.

XXIII

Truth First

A tribute that falls short of the full truth is more harmful than useful, for the reader may judge wrongly about the object of such a tribute. Where contradictions exist, especially in facts about a spiritual Master, the whole will be considered as unreliable, for all are not in a position to sift the wheat from the chaff.

The sun is independent of any human activity, and its light cannot be increased or embellished. We can only dim its brilliance in attempt-

ing to adapt its power to the strength of our weak organisms, which cannot stand its full intensity.

So the spiritual light in the person of a Master does not need any amplification of its true brilliance. To attempt such would be but presumption on our part.

In ancient pagan ceremonies it was thought that the smearing of butter on the stone figure of the idol-god was pleasing to the god himself, and the painting of the deity in brilliant colors was a mark of respect and worship. The conceptions of the Lord are restricted by the minds of the worshipers. Later periods have evolved wider conceptions.

Classical Indian philosophy has given us exact and scientific data of the higher states of consciousness in man, which the Masters of Vedanta revealed in those books which are now the Hindu sacred scriptures.

Sri Maharshi often used the already well-known terms employed in these writings when speaking with those who were acquainted with them. But his wisdom was not derived from those scriptures, as he himself often stated, and holy writings were only a confirmation of what he knew from experience before he ever read them. His explanations gave new life and clarity to many existing terms. It would be well to analyze here the ones widely used for the different forms of spiritual ecstasy called *Samadhi*.

According to the teachings of the Maharshi there are, broadly speaking, two kinds of *Samadhi*. The outer expression alone will be considered here, not their inner content, for that is outside the scope of this chapter.

The first and lower kind of *Samadhi* is called *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. In this the consciousness of the individual raised to this level is united with the Whole for a limited time, while he is immersed in the bliss of the spiritual light. But at the same time the bodily functions are limited, and normal life and activity are incompatible with *Kevala Samadhi*. The experiencer must sit quietly, as in a trance, the body immovable and stiff, with the outer senses not functioning. He cannot hear or see the physical world until the ecstasy ends. Sri Maharshi likened this form of *Samadhi* to a bucket of water let down into a well. It became merged with the water of the well, but it can be drawn out again, and lose contact with the Whole. This means that the ecstasy is ended when his, to him, normal (earthly) consciousness is resumed.

We are told that, after he came to Arunachala, the young Ramana took up different places as his abode, and was merged in periods of deep contemplation, when his body was quite insensible and indifferent to its conditions. But apart from this we find in Maharshi's own sayings, recorded in his biography* such an expression as "I was not in *Samadhi*," and so on.

When Paul Brunton came to him in 1930, he noted these different states of the Maharshi, calling them simply spiritual trances, and noticed that he could not hear when spoken to while in such a state.

For a logical mind, with even only theoretical knowledge of the matter, this means that the body of Sri Maharshi was still limited while the spirit performed its higher flights. These facts point to a state of *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi.*

Years later, when answering some questions, the Master is reported to have said that after his first illumination, which led him to the Hill of Arunachala as his life abode, the state of his consciousness was basically unchanged. By some this is taken to mean that the Maharshi reached the fullness of uninterrupted union, *Sahaja Samadhi*, at the very moment of the first illumination.

Without experience of these states it is impossible to have a clear understanding of the matter. The memory of even a short period of the true spiritual consciousness can never be effaced, but remains as part of the individual for ever. Nothing else is as vivid. Always the memory of the Light is with him though he cannot be indefinitely merged in it. It is as if one who has traveled through a country remembers perfectly the towns and rivers and mountains passed, and is quite sure of their existence. But actually to see them again one has to travel once more through that country.

The second type of *Samadhi*, *Sahaja Samadhi*, was compared by the Rishi to a river that reaches the ocean and loses its water in it. Then the mind is utterly destroyed and lost in the Self, and not only temporarily stilled as in Kevala. The bucket can no more be retrieved from the well, for the rope (ego) is broken. In this state, the functions of the body are no more an obstacle for the continuous experience of the ultimate union. The outer body moves, talks, and is silent, but the consciousness is merged forever in the realm of the Real or Self. Then

* *Self-Realisation. Life & Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, by B. V. Narasimha Swami.

there are no more trances, for the sublime and ultimate state has been reached. The *Sahaja Samadhi* has become his NATURAL state, as the Maharshi himself called it.

I myself never saw the Master in any but this natural state of supreme perennial contemplation, having at the same time full powers and faculties of the physical body responding to the conditions of the world about him. And I observed him with keen attention.

This means then, that the spirit, the only Reality, was no more hindered by wearing the body, but could manifest itself continually and without limitation of the body.

The river had given its waters to the ocean and they could never be recalled.

In his early years* Sri Maharshi himself said that in the state of meditation he was unable to see or hear anything in this world (para.: "A Master in meditation . . ."). But this state was evidently not the last one, for we know that in the second half of his life the Master was in constant meditation and yet could detect the slightest error in the reading of the scriptures or in the chanting of the Vedas, although apparently absent from this world in thought (see addition to *Maharshi's Gospel* written by Sri Siddheswarananda).

Who knows what changes in the structure of the brain cells are needed for the continuous carrying of the powerful vibrations of the Overself? This in itself would be sufficient reason why no Master known to humanity (Christ, Buddha, and so on) had reached full ripeness before his youth was over. Since the physical death of the Maharshi, some persons have begun to create a growing stream of naïve legends round his person that he can no longer deny or correct. These individuals are like those famous fanatics whom a Pope once jokingly described as "being more Catholic than the Pope himself."

To ascribe to the Maharshi what is not fact can only be harmful, for it distorts his own words and gives them meanings that he never intended. Moreover, the creating of such legends can only cover him with a veil of unreality and tend to overshadow the Man Sri Maharshi, whom many of us used to know and love so deeply as a living luminous figure, a beacon for the future generations.

So first, let us be the Truth and honor this Truth.

* See chapter "Instructions to F. H. Humphreys" from *Self-Realization . . .* by Narasimha Swami.

XXIV

How To Start

There is a wise saying: "A single step begins the journey of a thousand miles," and everyone will agree that without that first step there could not be any progress at all. Now, when we are in search of our supreme good—our true Being, or Self—the question of beginning steps toward Realization becomes a cardinal one.

A method must be found, and not just a method, but the true one. If we closely study the sayings of Sri Maharshi in this matter, we will certainly find that he always placed more emphasis on the NATURAL form of that method. And what is "natural" for us? Of course, that which comes instinctively, as from the hidden depths of our Being. We act without much deliberation or doubt only when we are already accustomed to an action. This means that our habits can be of first-class importance to us. The ancient Romans, who were good psychologists, left us a maxim: *Consuetudo est altera natura,* meaning "Habit is our second nature." During our lifetime on earth we create plenty of habits, which may be good, bad, or indifferent, but by controlling them and their development we can reform our very nature, and that is hard to deny.

The process of eradicating our undesirable habits and forming instead those which appear to be right is one of *superimposing* rather than of extermination. We *cannot remove them* one by one and insert others in their place, for the method is far too time-consuming and uncertain. But we can create positive habits and use them *instead of* the former negative ones. In other words, substitute desirable for undesirable. For example: suppose that I am always impatient under certain circumstances. Now, as soon as I become conscious of the fact that it is a vice that may bar my path and delay achievement, I would try, at the first opportunity, to *change* my previous behavior and to develop patience,

where before was only inner trouble. So, I would become quiet in circumstances where formerly I was full of impatience. If we persist in this process we will be surprised at how quickly a vice disappears, and an evil habit be overcome by a good one. Then we begin to gain confidence in our own power. This FIRST step is most important and others will soon follow one after another. For then, our nature is being changed in accordance with the Roman aphorism.

Now we may deal with the more important aspect of this subject, that is, how we can use the force of habit on our spiritual path. We must start with rather small things. Firstly, decide to begin and end each day with a short meditation, *mantra*, or—the best of all—the *Vichara*, the Quest: Who Am I?. Such a practice will compel us to arise about a quarter of an hour earlier and to retire a little later. Also, previously on awakening and before retiring we may have been accustomed to harbor quite different kinds of thoughts; but now, according to our decision, we have to alter the old order. If we persist, the new habit will invariably *of itself* replace the former. Gradually our behavior changes and, what is most important, it becomes NATURAL without any need for artificial means or efforts. With one problem solved, one habit overcome by another, we develop more confidence in our inner power and that first victory becomes a cornerstone for others that may follow.

Our mind possesses a kind of automatic activity. It likes to repeat the same actions at the same time. Knowing this, a wise disciple will find a practically unlimited field for his further improvement. It would be impossible to enumerate here even a fraction of the instances where we may create and superimpose desirable habits. I would only like to mention, on broad lines, that the time fixed by us for meditation will automatically be remembered when the hour arrives. The use of a positive attitude instead of our former negative one will also automatically come to mind. When we pick up a familiar spiritual writing that once produced some elation in our consciousness, the mere fact of opening the book, even before we read a few sentences, will direct us into the spiritual current; our daily work will become less or even not at all tiring. If we try to impose peace on our mind in circumstances where there is usually conflict, the peace will come of itself in a NATURAL WAY as soon as the evil habit has been replaced by the good one, and then it will be EFFORTLESS.

I know of the case of a disciple who, whenever trouble seemed to envelop his consciousness, always used to pronounce mentally a certain *mantra* of deep spintual meaning. At first it was a great effort for him to remember the *mantra* and repeat it in place of the usual disorderly thinking of the average man; but later it came of itself, quite naturally and difficulties were overcome almost without any participation of his mind.

Now we may be in a better position to understand the statement of the Maharshi, that the effort exists only at the beginning. When the mind is directed in certain channels, it gets accustomed to use them almost automatically.

In our previous lives we acquired the evil habit of dispersing our thoughts in innumerable directions. Such thoughts, says the Master, become extremely weak and meffective. So now we have to reverse matters and create the habit of inner concentration. When this is reached, a new consciousness, which we may call peace and Silence, dawns in us. It is the first ray of *Samadhi.*

When the habit of merging in the higher state of consciousness develops into a natural tendency, the former one, of becoming involved with thousands of thoughts affecting only our perishable EGO, retires to the second plane, until it disappears forever. Then the *Samadhi* becomes perennial, and the man becomes a Master, a Liberated one, a *Jivan Mukta.*

Those who had the ability and the opportunity to observe the Maharshi in his daily life could see the natural and unconstrained attitude of the Sage, which was so different from his surroundings. Then one, seeing the living EXAMPLE, could clearly anticipate the solution of his own inner problems.

XXV

The Immediate Result

Many old and new followers of Ramana Maharshi are disappointed by the apparently poor results of their use of the Self-inquiry, or *Vichara*. They find that after a few days' use of this wonderful means, sudden enlightenment does not come. So they want to know the cause of their failure.

Many years ago the Master pointed out in answer to a question put to him by a European visitor that success in the Quest depends entirely upon the aspirant's inner maturity.

This is the right answer for every one of us, because everything depends on what we are before we start on the Quest of the Self. The Rishi called this achievement "the diving into the Self with one-pointed mind." And to avoid disappointment, this is just what we must realize: that we must FIRST possess this indispensable means—the one-pointed mind.

We know, according to the Sage's teachings, that he usually did not advise or approve of occult means or classical yogic methods being used, as they are not practical and lead only to side issues. But one of them he considered useful. It is called *japa* or the method of controlling and transforming the mind by the repetition of a chosen maxim, *mantra*, or holy name. The theme of such *japa* does not matter very much. It can be the sacred syllable Om or Aum; a verse from the Vedas; the name of one of the gods of India's pantheon; the name of Christ or Buddha, and so on.

When studying Christian mysticism a long while ago, I found that some of the Saints used only short prayers or invocations to the Almighty, repeating them innumerable times a day for many years, and their description of the results achieved are the same as those of Indian Yogis. The result common to both Western Saints and Eastern Yogis

is the blissful state of mind; an inner peace that casts aside all troubles; a peculiar endurance of the body, and immunity from temptations.

In the already mentioned book *In Days of Great Peace* the attentive reader will find an actual description of how the author used the Quest in a similar way to *japa* in his first attempts to find the true approach to his aim, the real *Vichara* or Self-inquiry. A full course of training in concentration—*japa* being only a part of it—has been given in another book by the writer entitled *Concentration*.

Japa can bestow on us the needed concentration and control of mind, leading us to the point where we become the gunpowder of which Maharshi spoke. How then does this *japa* work? Those who follow the method of the Master by that fact become men of action and not of dead theories. Life is too short to waste its limited time. I will tell you now how to follow the direct line of action.

Each day, divide your time into two parts. The *first* will be given over to your necessary duties in this world (your profession, or other activities connected with the material or bread-winning side of your life), because at the beginning you will certainly be unable to perform the exercises at the same time. So, at that moment, do not worry about *japa*.

The *second* will be the time apart from such compulsory occupations, usually filled, as is the case with the average, untrained man, with ceaseless mental brooding, automatic and pointless, which is often useless even in daily life. It is this time that must be filled with the repetition of the selected form of your mental concentration, or, in other words, *japa*.

You may repeat in these intervals the sacred syllable "Aum" or something different, as previously mentioned. You will find plenty of time for it: even going to work, traveling in cars or trains, rest pauses between work, taking your meals, and so on.

FILL ALL THESE PERIODS WITH *JAPA*.

Repeat the *japa* consciously in your mind—not only with your lips—and that will exclude all thoughts. One of the properties of the mind is its inability to concentrate on many points simultaneously. Otherwise we could never attain one-pointedness. The number of repetitions must be counted accurately. Use whichever method of counting seems easiest for you. Monks and some Indians as well as Tibetans use rosaries. But this is not always practicable, especially in Western countries.

With a certain amount of persistence you will find the method that

suits you best. Without effort nothing can be reached or achieved. At first you can use a definite number of *japas* every day, increasing them as your power—it is only power—grows stronger. When you do the exercises at first, you may encounter the resistance of your restless and still uncontrolled mind. But, by replacing every incoming thought with the *japa*, you will at last overcome and end it.

Always remember, the mind is only a form of energy, existing in you, and it is by no means infinite. Being submitted to trial by *japa*, the mind behaves itself, just as an untamed animal tires by its unwillingness to submit to the tamer's persistence and far stronger will.

This is the point that you must recognize clearly and beyond all doubt. Students of *japa* tell us that after some time *the mind itself repeats the theme* of the *japa*, its tendency to various thoughts being transformed. Be quite certain of this.

The end and aim of this practice is just to achieve that state when the mind becomes controlled and does its work, *japa*, instead of wandering along as before, after its own unco-ordinated will. Now, some will ask: "What is the difference between *japa* and Self-inquiry or *Vichara*? Why not use the *Vichara* instead of *japa*, and all will be well?" *But that would not be so.*

The difference between *Vichara* and *japa* is very great. Actually, *Vichara* is beyond the mind's functions, and its aim is the transcending of the mind and its field of consciousness, leaving man to his immortal spiritual realm, independent of every thinking process. In other words, it may be defined as separation from the mind-brain.

Japa is only a means to knowing what the mind is, and through this wisdom to bring it under control.

Inevitably, as the result of mind control, comes the recognition that WE ARE NOT THE MIND. This is because the controlling factor (power) cannot at the same time be the controlled. So the student will understand that the subduing of the mind must inevitably lead us to a realization of the NEXT REALM of consciousness, a supermental one.

While the immediate inner illumination or realization of the Self is not always accessible, at all times, to everyone, the performing of *japa* as a forerunner to Self-inquiry, leading to Self-Realization, IS at the disposal of all. And, for this, it does not need superhuman faculties at all. It needs only a clear and reasonable thinking mind, able to draw logical conclusions from given material submitted to its judgment, plus

a will strong enough to win the first battle with the relentless thinking process in the mind.

For the FIRST VICTORY brings self-confidence, which in time becomes a further means to the winning of the ultimate battle, your battle for achievement of the uninterrupted consciousness, which is beyond death and conditioned life.

XXVI

Mind and Its Role in a Spiritual Search

It seems to be a paradox: everyone uses the mind, but who knows exactly what it IS? Even mind's nature is not easy to define. By the imaginative power of thought we can visit the limits of the universe—if such exist—in a lightninglike and incorporeal flight, leaving matter as we know it far behind us. In our normal consciousness we are able to perform the most complicated calculations, reflect on the most abstract of ideas, and think about things that have almost no connection with the material basis of the visible world: for seemingly there is no limit to the number of these so-called nonmaterialistic activities of the human mind. Yet a severe headache, a serious physical illness, or even slight damage to a few important brain cells will immediately end all these high flights.

Such a realistic but unbiased picture is presented for our investigation, but even it belongs to the realm of the mind.

Possession of a brilliant and well-developed mind does not solve the old problem of its nature, although perhaps it allows us to make better use of it than less gifted human beings.

The outer manifestation of that mysterious thing we call mind is actually all we can perceive. This manifestation is dual as we can conclude from the foregoing, for at the same time it is entirely dependent upon the condition of the particular body and principally its brain, while on the other hand the mind's functions far surpass all the limita-

tions of the physical vehicle and world. Where then lies the solution if any?

The average man usually considers his *mind* and *emotional life*, as well as the two above-mentioned properties, as being his full and only possible consciousness, which he believes to be inseparable from himself. He tends to forget that there are some intervals free from thoughts and emotions, in which he nevertheless feels the fullness of life.

Like a fish always submerged, which has no conception of life beyond its watery habitat, so a person actually immersed in the threefold manifested world accessible to his perceptions (that is, the physical, emotional and mental levels) cannot possibly take any superior point of view, so indispensable for analyzing this *manifestation* independently of *itself*.

In this chapter our aim is to study only the last and highest level of the world as it is known to us, that of mind.

To adopt a superior point of view calls for the ability to separate oneself from the usual compulsion of incessant thinking in order to "see," from a "neutral" ground, just how the mind functions. This comparatively simple-looking problem is actually a highly individual and very serious one, and its solution is by no means within the reach of everyone. We cannot see what is on top of a table until our eyes are at a point above it. This is exactly the same with the problem of the mind. Those fully able to raise their awareness deliberately above their thinking level of consciousness alone possess the answer to the question: What is the mind?

The Maharshi destroys the question with one powerful stroke of the sword of Wisdom when he says: "Mind is only a bundle of thoughts. Stop thinking and show me then where is the mind."

For the majority of individuals this statement is too hard to grasp and consequently accept. Only a few are able to make immediate use of the key given by the Sage.

Therefore we can attempt to create some less direct but more accessible methods, which we can try for ourselves. Knowledge is based on experience, and only then can it be called such. Anything else is purely imagination. This is especially inseparable from the subject of our search, that is, the mind and its functions as outlined here, in relation to which we must first find our own position.

TEST

How can we acquire any knowledge about the manifestation of the Cosmic Mind or the universe if we are not in control of our own small part of it? I certainly cannot read a book in a foreign language unless I know its alphabet. How can I write if my fingers do not obey my will, transmitted to them from my brain by the nervous system?

So we need to test our powers. Try to arrange things in the following way, which will be easy to accept because of its logic and simplicity. Choose an hour when you are unlikely to be disturbed by outside interruptions, when you are not expecting visitors and can be completely alone, preferably in your own room to ensure privacy.

Arrange everything so that there will be no need for you to think about anything during the time chosen for the test, and be firmly conscious of this fact. Then later, when interruptions from the side of the mind occur, you will feel no NECESSITY to listen to the suggestions of the thinking principle. This is very important, for without fulfilling this condition the result will be negative and hence unconvincing for you.

Now you are absolutely FREE from any problems and do not wish to be concerned with them during the test period.

Sit in a comfortable position with the head and spine held erect, but do not lean against anything, and with the eyes opened or closed as preferred.

Say to yourself: "Now I have no need to think about anything as I have decided to remain free from all thoughts for the time being and so will consider them to be intruders. I do not expect to be curious about thinking as nothing worthwhile can come from thought during this period, for I wish only to be free from every outside influence. I want to be able to watch my mind without being compelled to listen to its activity. It is within my full right to do this." You will find that this preparation tends to make clear to you the method to follow in this test.

Now you can begin.

Stop thinking! There is absolutely no necessity for it as you decided for the short period of the test, which may show you your position in relation to your own mind, whether you are a slave or a ruler.

Now the fight begins. Numerous thoughts strive to gain entry to your brain seeking the consideration they get throughout the remainder of your day. They do not want you to be free for even five minutes. They attack you pitilessly like a cruel master whipping the slave who stopped work for a few moments.

Can you be really thought-free for even five minutes? If not, who are you? Slave or master?

Now analyze the type of thoughts that tried to destroy your test. Are they of immediate importance, and does your life and well-being depend upon them? Surely not! But even if they are important, there are still twenty-three hours left in your day in which to be occupied with these "essential" problems. Only this small portion of your time was selected to be "sacrificed" for your vital endeavour. There is no real reason to be disturbed during this small part of your day, and yet, your mind already rebels and tries to compel you to accept its dictation.

Briefly, it seems that you are to be prevented from emerging from the ocean of mind for even the shortest time. You are dependent upon it every second of your physically conscious life. So, the fish hopes to see the vast horizons without rising above the surface of the water. Is this possible?

You may, of course, repeat the test. If you persist, the interval of freedom from thoughts will be longer in proportion to your efforts and the time sacrificed for the purpose. But the first test will invariably end in defeat and a proof that you are rather the slave of some power (the mind, as we call it here) than a master of it: that you do not know WHY you think this or another thought, and from where they are coming to your consciousness.

So, as you can see for yourself, the way to your emergence from the ocean of mind is still long, and without stilling the incessant sound of its waves, you cannot hope to hear the voice of spiritual Consciousness, which is far beyond that of the mind. You cannot see your image in the ruffled surface of a muddy pool.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE TEST

If one can deliberately and steadily eliminate thoughts for even five minutes, there is no need to read or study this chapter. When the mind is transcended, the supermental consciousness steps in of itself. But

with one reservation: the stilling or domination of the mind must be achieved in the normal way, that is, without using any artificial or physical means, such as special breathing exercises, postures, hypnotism, or drugs. Such methods do not lead us very far. If temporary stillness of the mind is achieved by any of these things, it is *not* attained by inner strength, but rather by a kind of anesthetic applied to the mind's activities. Of course, the results are only short-lived and of doubtful value for a serious seeker.

Success should be achieved by our own growing INNER STRENGTH, which is dependent upon our will power, directed by the clear understanding of what was explained in the "Test" part of this chapter. This means that there should be a *conscious separation* of a man *from his thinking and emotional processes*. Put both of them in their rightful place and cease to identify yourself with them, for this is a *sine qua non* for the full understanding of the mind's nature, without which there can be no achievement at all. It is true that sometimes results are apparently reached by other methods, apart from the aforementioned psychophysical ones, but these are quite unsatisfactory in their subsequent effects.

Saints and mystics have developed considerable degrees of concentration and ability to exclude the mind's activities from their field of awareness. This has not been achieved by scientific or logical means, but by the power of prayer, ecstasies, and auto-suggestion, all of which are suitable for only a very limited number of men, since such methods are peculiar to and dependent upon the particular inner structure of certain men.

Therefore it would be hard to recommend these ways to persons of a different temperament and more average level of development, as there would be a very insignificant chance of realization or even understanding of such means.

We have to make all this very clear to ourselves before we can hope to take any profit from the following pages.

Among the apparently well constructed and scientific methods for the definite solution of the problem of the mind, there are only two that can be recommended with all safety and any hope of success.

1. The supreme one is the DIRECT PATH as shown to us by Sri Ramana Maharshi, and is based on the Self-inquiry process, the

Vichara. This Path has already been described in this book and fully commented upon with extensive explanations in a number of other books and articles. So there is no purpose in repeating the same information here.*

2. The second Path is intended for less advanced students who find the *Vichara* method, as given in the Direct Path, too hard for them. The alternative is the use of *japa* exercises, which may prove more suitable until such time as the mind is sufficiently strengthened to undertake the first Path.

   Some explanations about *japa* and its use occur in the above-cited references and a practical exposition of it may be found in Chapter XXV of this book, "The Immediate Result."

As a conclusion to this attempt to test our ability to control the thinking apparatus, a firm conviction should arise in us that the true CAUSE of nonenlightenment or spiritual ignorance does not rest on any lack of suitable and authontative teachings or methods given to mankind. The Truth lies in just the opposite direction. There are many systems, and among them are a few real teachings, given by the Great Teachers of humanity; but the number of those who are capable of realizing and following the revealed paths to attainment is very small, and always has been so, and all too few are those who want to practice Truth instead of merely speaking and reading about it.

Poor intelligence and absence of spiritual aspiration, based on the thirst for Truth, prevents our grasping new teachings and fully appreciating their great exponents. Common curiosity and the curse of hobbyism in occult matters are, alas, the unworthy substitutes for the seeking of Truth and Reality these days.

Although they have the Gospels of Christ, the wisdom of Buddha, and now the latest message, in our own period, given by the Great

* These references may be consulted: (1) All the writings of Sri Maharshi: *Who Am I? Truth Revealed*, and *Self-Inquiry*. (2) Books written by disciples and devotees of the Master such as *Maha Yoga* by Who; *Self-Realization. Life & Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* by B. V. Narasimha Swami; *Maharshi's Gospel*; chapters devoted to this subject in *In Days of Great Peace*, published by G. Allen & Unwin Ltd. (The foreign editions of this book have different titles); and *Concentration*, Harper and Brothers (3) Interesting comments by the Master also appear in the three volume work, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

Rishi Ramana, most persons are still seeking for more exciting revelations. As a result they invariably fall into the clutches of the false "masters" who strip them of their material means and of their faith in higher things as well.

But the more one becomes enlightened from within, seeing the imperishable Light that reigns beyond the level of the mind's activity, the more one is capable of recognizing the truth in such revelations. Then there is no inclination to argue about the alleged superiority of any particular one of these teachings, for the underlying oneness of them all is clearly understood.

The Source of Truth is ONE, so how can the rivers that have their beginning in that Source have no Truth in their waters?

On becoming familiar with the Path of Intuition shown by the Great Rishi, those of us who are serious seekers can observe how more Light solves the basic problems of life and yields constant inspiration from that imperishable Source.

But unfortunately, the majority of people prefer to argue uselessly about the "superiority" of various philosophical and religious systems, thereby wasting their lives instead of taking the opportunity of advancement offered to them.

The only solution lies in the enlargement and improvement of our means of cognition. The wiser we are, the better we become and the wider the fields of activity and the horizons of vision—otherwise unknown—that are opened to us. Of what use is it to speak indefinitely about God, Spirit, spirituality, Wisdom, immortality, and so on, using all the old truisms, if these remain only in the realm of our mental theories, and we never actually taste them for ourselves?

Intelligence alone is far from being wisdom, for it only means that some minds have sharper edges. Even geniuses do not know why they are attracted to certain branches of human knowledge in preference to others: why the man called Louis Pasteur went his own way to make discoveries to benefit mankind, and why Thomas Alva Edison preferred to delve into electricity, instead of bacteriology. All becomes clear to us when the SOURCE of the mind, that is, its nature and the origin of the uninterrupted flow of thoughts, becomes known.

We should also remember the axiom that in order to know and thereby control the mind, one must be APART from it. We must not

be caught up in its streams any more than a car driver, who is unaffected by the revolutions of the wheels, but quietly takes full profit from their movements.

The same thing is necessary for everyone who strives after more light and bliss. In the ability of silencing the mind, even temporarily, lies the secret of ruling it.

From personal experience I can recall how the inability to direct the currents of my mind seemed terrible when I first encountered the *Vichara*. I recognized that in it lay the solution of all my inner problems and I was full of enthusiasm and faith, and yet in spite of all that, the results were poor, until the persistent effort allowed me the needed degree of concentration. When I wanted to exclude all thoughts and place the Self-inquiry (Who Am I?) before the inner screen of my consciousness, scores of unwanted and uninvited thoughts began to storm my mind relentlessly, without permission, apparently unperturbed by my decision to keep them away. This feeling of helplessness was frightening and extremely humiliating. Only the firm belief in the statement of the Master that "the power of the mind is a limited quantity of energy and as it is by no means infinite its resistance can therefore be overcome," gave me the necessary faith and final success in the fight. "Distracting thoughts are like the enemy in the fortress. As long as they are in possession of it, they will certainly sally forth. But if you would, as and when they come out, put them to the sword, the fortress will finally be captured." So if, as Maharshi tells us, we harass each invading thought with the *Vichara*, our victory is certain.

As this technique is strictly applied, the resistance of the thinking principle (mind) lessens. Then at last it begins to follow the Self-inquiry automatically, just as it previously did the thousands of useless thoughts that so obsessed it all life long. At the same time, from the apparently still normal consciousness emerges "Something" new and hitherto unknown. It is self-asserting, self-sufficient, and independent of the thinking process. It is just "That" which can control the mind, and orders given by "That" are immediately executed. It is quite logical, for we cannot be suspended in emptiness. When we remove, even temporarily, the mind's field from our awareness, it must be replaced by another higher power as a fruit of our inner victory, and such is the fact.

No exact description can be given, but some approximate hints may elucidate the position. It is a quiet one, from which all the activity of

the mind can be observed and ruled. This fulcrum is motionless, and all the feverish mental desires resulting from incessant thinking are far below ITS level. As the mind likes to think, vibrate, so THAT is majestic in ITS unruffled peace and lack of desires. Perhaps it is because there is no trace of curiosity: how could the deathless, beginningless, and formless be interested in the ephemeral apparitions of that which we call the world and ourselves along with it. The *knowledge* of the existence of that Supreme Refuge is magnificent in its simplicity and is all-pervading, for it is free from all *manifested* forms that are unrealities, so imperfect, full of troubles, false hopes, disappointments, short-lived pleasures, and bitter sufferings.

In IT one knows that everything is right and as it should be, and that nothing can be wrong once we leave the ruffled and noisy surface for the depths where no wave dares to enter any more. Then the old intellectual argument about the so-called "free will" or lack of it ceases to exist for ever. For then we ARE just what and where we really want to be and no longer on the noisy, restless surface of things, but in that eternal peace: the CORE OF BEING.

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THE AIM

Now it can be seen that the object of our study was the mind, the thinking principle, or power in man. This energy differs when animating different brains, or rather the degree of intelligence varies from person to person. But the laws governing the ocean of mind are always the same in all their manifestations. If we enumerate the qualities of the energy called mind, we shall undoubtedly reach the following conclusions:—

1. It has an innate inclination to incessant activity, no matter what form this may take. Thoughts may be spoken of as the result of mind's activity or as vibrations. Then another definition is required, for mind generates vibrations in its own subtle but still material essence.
2. Generally speaking, the mind's energy does not discriminate between the particular forms of its activity, which are termed good and evil. Processes in the consciousness are equally reflected in the

mind's vibrations, no matter whether they are positive or negative, creative or destructive, balanced or disordered. We can be assaulted alike by both kinds, depending upon the "filter" deep within our own consciousness.

3. The mysterious ability to choose between these vibrations is unique to man, but not everyone is in a position to make a deliberate choice. His inner structure is responsible for this. We cannot expect a man whose predominant characteristics have been on a comparatively low cultural level and whose moral faculties are poor to be *suddenly* transformed into a saint, scientist, or philosopher. Although all kinds of mental and emotional vibrations are present around us at all times, men usually respond to those most familiar to them, just as different radio receivers have varying ranges of reception, depending upon their construction. Some will receive only the nearest broadcasts, while others will catch even the weakest of signals from transmitters located in the other hemisphere.
4. That conscious power apparent in some of us, which tells us to analyze the functions and nature of that subdivision of the mind's energy which is at our disposal and called thought, does not originate in the mind. It is the dawn of a superior principle in the human consciousness, which apparently operates, in the beginning, by means of the same mind. The subtle difference between this supramental element in us, still is embryo, and the ordinary thinking processes, is at first hard to discover. It is found by using an invariably introspective method, whose end is directed to setting a limit to the mind's activities and controlling them from a new point of view. It cannot be the same old mind that does not like any limitation of its vibratory manifestations as we have already seen experimentally from the "Test" part of this chapter.

   The consciousness of the existence of that controlling factor cannot be clear to us in the beginning, when everyday mental awareness occupies the foremost part in us. There are no sudden leaps in nature as we know it, but evolutionary movements are the cause of the gradual changes in us.

By this brief analysis, which started with the mind and its role in man's life, we have come to the superior element, deeply hidden in

most of us but openly resplendent, at the present period of humanity's existence, only in the exceptional cases of a few very advanced Beings, some of whom have been deified in the course of the history of our species.

Between them and the still spiritually inert (because of lack of the controlling factor) masses of mankind are innumerable degrees of what we call spiritual attainment or enlightenment. All these have one common property: they go beyond the realm of thought, which is that of the mind-brain. This is worth remembering as a standard for our own investigations into the depths of human consciousness, which is actually the essence of man, or simply, the man himself.

If we realize this, then we will be safe from the many false paths that are disguised as spiritual and elevated revelations and so on. If their ultimate aim is not the expansion of human consciousness beyond its present limits, then they are really only concealed efforts to perpetuate the temporary and nonessential rule of the mind-brain.

The mind's realm is a mortal one, as should easily be recognized. But that which surpasses it is Spirit, unattached and independent of all the limitations of matter, irrespective of whatever subtle form may veil it.

This short study was of necessity given in words. But words are the children of the mind and only through the mind can they enter the consciousness of the average man. Therefore the attentive student can see that, unlike pouring water from one vessel to another, it is not possible directly to transmit Wisdom by means of speech or writing. Then he will not expect a result that can never be. The rails that direct the wheels of a train are only a means to help it fulfil its destiny and are unimportant in themselves, for without the train they are meaningless since they are made only for one purpose.

The same applies to each method created in order to help people who are able to undertake the journey into a so far unknown land. If there is a carriage, the rails will be of use to it.

The inner urge to investigate, to solve the problem of our own Being, to find harmony where we usually see only change, to discover a firm justification for our life, as well as an extension of it beyond the short and limited earthly manifestation, may be the first indication that al-

ready there is a motor in the carriage capable of driving it along the chosen rails. Everyone should take care of himself, for who else can be responsible for a man if not himself?

When analyzing the mind and its functions, we will invariably find that these are closely connected with the conditioned physical life. This means that, if the basis of the variable conditions is removed, where will we discover any reason to occupy our consciousness with the stream of innumerable thoughts? Of what are we thinking? How much real necessity is there in the process? Can we think clearly when we have a severe headache, fever, or any other bodily discomfort?

So, this manifestation of life is a limited and highly conditioned one. It is just a vicious circle from which there is no exit on its own plane.

An imaginary two-dimensional entity would be unable to leave any closed figure we might draw around it, just as we could not leave a room without doors or windows. But if we *raise* the two-dimensional being into the next, the third dimension, then any encircling figure would be ineffective, although it would be impossible for the "entity" to conceive what power could have annihilated the impenetrable lines round it.

It is similar with the mind and its own "dimension" in which alone it can function. It cannot transcend its own realm by its own efforts until a new power or dimension is discovered.

All occult exercises, systems of Yoga, and even religious asceticism have as their ultimate aim, often unperceived by superficial students, just the raising of the level of man's life-consciousness above the three-dimensional limits in which lie birth, change, pleasure, suffering, experience, activities, strivings, good and evil, and finally death.

There are no means to alter this state of things because they are subject to an unchangeable law, ruling on the particular level or plane.

But rising to the next level of consciousness is like a person encircled by high walls being removed by helicopter, just as was described in the example of the imaginary two-dimensional being, which we freed from its impenetrable enclosing lines by raising it to our own dimension.

To conclude this theme briefly and practically we can say: make yourself independent of the conditions of your mind or thinking apparatus and then you will find the solution to the problem of your existence. Not as a new theory, which could then be exchanged for another, as

happens with so many of us, but as an unalterable truth which everyone is seeking, no matter whether or not he is aware of that unique fact.

XXVII

The Way to Samadhi

The keystone of all knowledge is experience. We can read books about mathematics, but without practical application of the formulas, without any personal solving of the problems, we will never become mathematicians. We can read a score of books about the construction of a motor car, but we will never become mechanics unless we have practical experience in the garage workshop.

All knowledge, if it is to be of value, must be not only of the mind but part of the consciousness. Moreover, we must acquire the ability to apply in practice for ourselves that which was shown by the teacher.

Briefly, we must know how.

Every accomplished musician will say that once the primary knowledge of notes and keys of music is gained, his progress then depends on the practice he gives to it.

There is no exception, even in the realm of spiritual wisdom. The reading of the lives of Saints will not of itself produce a Saint. So the mental knowledge of the states of consciousness reached by Saints and Yogis will not produce that consciousness. If this is not thoroughly realized, the rest of this chapter might just as well not be read for its effect will be nil.

Having agreed with the foregoing we can proceed.

The aim of all spiritual teaching is to show the student the road to the realm of the Spirit. What stands in the way as the main obstacle is the fact that we are prone to use definitions loosely, without understanding what they really mean. Words such as God, Spirit, Truth, Realization of the true Self, all these synonyms are often used without any knowledge of what they really mean.

The famous Yogi Vivekananda said: "If God exists then we should see Him." Christian Saints speak of feeling the presence of God. Those who really understand speak with one voice, but to the average man these words have many and varied meanings.

We find the words Spirit or spiritual used to cover a variety of conceptions without any explanation as to the meaning to be conveyed. The latest form, Self-Realization, borrowed from the teachings of Sri Maharshi is well suited to the minds of twentieth-century humanity, but it too is also used by laymen with false or inappropriate meaning.

If in our academic learning, for example in mathematics, the student uses formulas with inexactitude, he will fail in his examinations until he learns their proper use. In spiritual wisdom there are no official degrees and no axioms accepted by material science. Therefore, the layman thinks that he can interpret everything in this realm to please himself; but to do so and not acquire an understanding of the true meaning of these terms, means that the individual will remain in ignorance and not have any experience of the higher state of consciousness.

Sri Ramana Maharshi has given us a simple and very powerful means of experiencing the higher states of consciousness of the very core of our Being, which he called the true Self. It is the constant and persistent inquiry within ourselves: WHO AM I?

There are necessary conditions as well, but this is the essence of his method. But what else is needed besides this excellent method? The individual is needed who is strong enough and of sufficiently high purpose to devote all his will to the attainment of this goal. For that purpose he has an instrument, a mind strong, one-pointed, and definite, which he can control, at least to some degree. It is obvious that the Self-inquiry is not for beginners. In the physical presence of the Great Rishi, the progress of those fortunate enough to have abided with him for a while was greatly accelerated, for the spiritual power of the Master was such that it might be compared to the giving of oxygen to a man dying of suffocation.

The unpreparedness of many of those who sat at his feet was often overcome by his tremendous spiritual magnetism, but as with everything else on this earthly plane, the Rishi's years as well as the number of his true disciples was limited. But posterity should be satisfied with what he has left us.

The Master incessantly pointed out that only by each individual

reaching the sublime state of spiritual (or real as he called it) consciousness, could a man realize the ultimate and unchanging Truth of his (and everyone's) Being. The first condition necessary for *Samadhi* is the absence or the elimination of thoughts.

This means that the student must acquire the power to control his mind and to regulate its activities after his own will. In effect, he must be able to think and not think, according to his will. Moreover, he must know what is mind and what laws it obeys.

This is not easy as we shall see.

How long is it possible for you to think about one simple thing, such as the head of a pin? How long can you ban all thoughts, compelling your mind to absolute stillness?

Take a pin and look intently at it in order to be able to visualize it later without actually looking at it (this test is to be made with a watch). Note the time and shut the eyes, continuing to visualize the head of the pin for as long as you can. Imagination or memory of the pin must be perfect, without any deviation or other thoughts slipping in. The moment you find yourself thinking about something else—that is, when concentration on the pin ceases—look at the watch and find out how long your period of perfect concentration lasted.

Again note the time and close your eyes and try not to think at all. Create a vacuum in your mind for as long as you can. Time yourself to see how long you can remain without any thoughts.

If the time in the first as well as the second test was less than a minute, then your ability to concentrate is as yet far below the standard required for any more complicated exercises.

Even the best tailor cannot make a garment without a needle. The mind that cannot work properly in a simple form of concentration is not ready for true meditation. Suitable exercises for improvement in concentration are then needed.

1. Spend a quarter of an hour each day in strengthening your mind. With eyes closed, imagine a black background. Then picture a white disc, about the size of a plate, one or two feet from your head. Rotate it fast in that position. This disc and its rotation must occupy your whole consciousness. If the mind deviates then you begin again. Think only of the white disc, without words or thoughts in your mind. Attempt it for thirty seconds and increase

the time period as your power grows. This will be your so-called "active" concentration.

2. With eyes closed, imagine a background as in the first exercise. Change the color every day but with no white disc, only the coloured background.

When you have attained some degree of power over your mind, as in the first exercise, each day gradually diminish the size of the disc till in the end it dwindles to the size of a pinhead, but always rotating. Then at last remove the disc altogether and imagine only the background.

The minimum of time required is three minutes for either concentration. If you reach five minutes, you are ready for initial meditation. The limit is ten minutes and whoever is able to perform this does not need any more practice. Few attain this degree of mind control in a short time, but when ten minutes is reached, then the time of concentration can be extended at will. It is not my purpose here to describe what may be accomplished by such a proficient student, and what can then happen to him.

For our purpose three minutes of strictly performed exercise will strengthen your mind-power enough. Then it is possible to approach meditation, which can lead us to that still unknown new state of consciousness.

Choose a quiet place where no one can intrude. Sunrise and sunset are the best times, but any other will do. Sit comfortably but with the spine vertical, and do not lean against anything. Hands may rest on the knees and the head must be in line with the spine.

Close the eyes and if noises intrude, stop the ears with wax.

Remember that, later, all the exercises must be performed with eyes and ears open.

3. For the first few days, think of the fact that thoughts cannot bring you any advantage in this endeavor, that they are without value for your real spiritual progress, that you are better without them, and finally that they are in a lower realm than your true Self.

This auto-suggestion is necessary in order to eradicate the age-long suggestion of your mind, that the thinking process is the unavoidable form of the consciousness.

So think of nothing else, using your newly acquired mind control. As the result of this there must come the conviction of the futility

of thinking while in your meditation. This brings about a lack of interest in the thinking process. Without this, every attempt to stifle thoughts is only a temporary and not a permanent condition, for the still active interest in the thinking process will bar your path. If the truth that any thought about the outer world will nullify your progress to the higher level of consciousness is firmly established, then you can pass to the next stage of meditation. But not before.

4. Sit as for Exercise No. 3 and begin to meditate about your own Being. Who are you? If you are the body and its functions, feelings, and thoughts (astral and mental), then you will die when your body dies. Can you accept this? Have you not an inner conviction of the indestructibility of your true Being? If so, then you can proceed. If not, all your efforts will be fruitless.

   You are not ready for the quest. Your best path is to live as well as you can, avoiding evil and trying to do good.

   Later, the time will come for you. Eternity has time for everything.

5. Now we should pass to the next step of widening our consciousness. Since you no longer believe that the body is you, even though it may be but in theory, you can pass to a form of practice of that theory. There is no special time for this, walking, working, sitting, try to observe your physical form as if from outside it, from above. In other words, attempt to be the witness of the activities of your own body. It may not be easy and success may not accompany the first exercises, but in the end you can achieve it.

   Then add to your observations of your physical activities your feeling and emotions (astral) and finally thoughts (mental). Be apart from them. Your previously acquired power over the mind should permit you to do so at least for some minutes. Only the first step is hard. When you find what happiness comes to you even for the short period when you are separated from your personality (made up of the physical, astral, and mental bodies) you will undoubtedly seek it often as the most desirable state of consciousness.

6. Now you may be ready for the great Self-Inquiry. In your chosen spot, in quietness and freedom from interruption, pass out from your physical body and for a short time, still all thoughts. Then without words ask, WHO AM I? In your inner consciousness will

be the conviction that what is seen, your outer form, is far from being YOU. Now seek incessantly for the whole time of your concentration, WHO ARE YOU? If thoughts arise, crush them with the same inquiry, *replacing* every intruder with it. How long should this last? You yourself can be the best judge. Finally, you come to the state of inner Silence. You are utterly beyond the reach of thoughts. For the moment, perhaps, you will feel that you begin to dissolve into something that is all-pervading. You have forgotten your earthly name, form, and conditions.

The conviction that you have little to do with that which was called "you" on the material plane may arise somewhat earlier. Cases vary. The very thought about your physical being, that which had your name and form in the material world, is capable of pulling you back from this higher state of consciousness, even though you may be on the verge of *Samadhi*. Therefore, the pupil must try at any cost to get rid of this dangerous and unwanted intruder, thought.

If the state of existence above and beyond the personality can be held without difficulty, then *Samadhi* should come, though of course in its temporary form, called by the Hindus *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Here all explanation must cease, for if you reach this sublime state, you need no more guidance and if you do not, your mind has not been sufficiently strengthened to subdue teachings, dogmas, and definitions from outside. There are better methods, used only by the Masters, and these are by speech, look, or silence, putting the aspirant in such an attitude that he himself may find the solution to his problems. Then such a solution would be his own living wisdom. This is all that matters in the school of human incarnations.

XXVIII

The Secret of Sankara

People who believe in eternal life—which of course cannot be anything other than uninterrupted self-awareness (whether or not they are still in the body)—often have little idea of what it is like.

It is true that an exact conception of this state is not possible as it transcends all mental pictures, and therefore one cannot attempt to express it.

But if one accepts as a necessary condition that there are no gaps in nature, then the highest state of the mind's consciousness must surely be close to the first dawning of spiritual awareness.

This statement finds support in the scriptures that describe the mind and its different states.

It is said, briefly, that the rajasic and tamasic modes of thinking are obstacles to the passage into the vast beyond of spiritual experience, whereas the sattvic mind is a kind of bridge to it.

One may accept that sattvic thinking means a balanced mind, which does not create uncontrolled and spontaneous thoughts, but rules their flow while itself remaining unaffected and not interested in them.

Curiosity is an attitude of the rajasic mind and laziness and stupor are tamasic qualities.

Therefore the Sage Sankaracharya tells us that the mind can both bind and liberate a man, depending on which quality prevails in it.

The limited consciousness of the average person is firmly linked with, and bound by the form of the gross body. No wonder then that Sri Maharshi told us that man's mind is in the shape of his body and also that the quality of his mind depends on the food he consumes.

Now, practically speaking, when one's body goes upstairs, for example, one says, and firmly believes, that it is oneself that performs the movement. That is the consequence of one's identification with the

gross form, the identification so often condemned in Sankara's incomparable *Viveka-Chudamani.*

When analyzed, this consciousness appears to be in the brain (the reader would have a better understanding of what follows if he himself would first perform such an analysis).

This conclusion is quite natural. For if the thinking process is one's highest level of consciousness, beyond which lies an unknown realm, then the physical instrument, the brain, is the closest counterpart of the "I" on the material level: in it is manifested one's inner life.

The vulnerability of such a state is evident. In it death is a terribly real monster and it is preceded by all the sufferings to which the human being is subject.

When Sankara speaks of a possible escape from those evils, he means what is expounded by all true Masters who come to help us in the distress and wanderings of our incarnations in matter.

That teaching is: one can raise one's consciousness to the level of one's real Self where there is no limitation and suffering. This can be likened to modern aircraft that fly above the weather to avoid clouds, rain, storms, and air currents.

Masters advise us to do the same. There is no other way to escape trouble and suffering.

Meditate for yourself: if you really know how little you have in common with that perishable form called you in this world of illusion, then how different a meaning would the loss of a limb have for you.

Sankaracharya further explains that, once liberated from the vampirelike obsession of the body-am-I belief, man's consciousness is very like the mental picture of infinite motionless space, unaffected by all the universes with their stars and planets, which are apparently immersed in that space.

There is a parallel in everyday experience. When measuring the cubic content of a room we do not mind if it is cluttered with furniture or empty. We know the space in it remains the same, being determined by the height, width, and length.

So the great space, says Sankara, has little in common with its temporary occupants, the innumerable galaxies and solar systems. The conception of space or ether is the closest to that of the unlimited, immaterial Spirit, *Atman,* Self, Cosmic Consciousness, and so on, all being synonymous.

This point is of overwhelming importance to every earnest seeker. It IS possible for those of us who have not yet been initiated into the higher Self-Awareness (*Samadhi*) to extend our minds to the limits of its powers of conception by imagining the infinite great space stretching beyond all the universes sown in it by the Supreme Power, or Overself.

A conscious effort to go out from the skull's confinement will definitely help to shorten the time taken to achieve Liberation or Realization of that which you really are, your true Self-*Atman*.

If you change the habit of imagining your consciousness as being restricted to the brain it will surely expand beyond it.

If it is our lot to be at the feet of a genuine Master (*Guru*) such helpful ideas will be born in us of themselves under the potent influence of the Great One Who has solved all questions forever and Who, having reached the Supreme State, is one with the Whole, Brahman, or God, no matter what we call IT.

I remember clearly how such new ideas, sought through a lifetime, became a reality almost from the first inner contact with Sri Maharshi. With that came the ability to leave the shell and merge into the Whole, the source of all Life.

The prerequisites are always the same, the stopping of all thoughts and feelings and the abandoning of interest in the outer *Maya* of the world. "You cannot serve God and Mammon," stated another Great Teacher.

If such favorable conditions are not part of our *karma*, we must seek a method to approach the secret key of the author of the *Crest-Jewel of Wisdom* (*Viveka-Chudamani*).

As a preparation to the real effort a thorough study of the book would be necessary to obtain a knowledge of the conceptions of the Master. This done, we may proceed with the appropriate meditation.

Sitting in a quiet place where we are not likely to be disturbed, we should try to realize that attaching our minds to the outer conditioned and relative material manifestation cannot lead us to anything beyond our temporary physical state as mortal individuals. That is one of the means to still the incessant activity of the mind caused by our curiosity about thinking and the conscious or unconscious expectation of obtaining something worthwhile from that thinking process.

As long as we retain that false expectation we will never be able to dominate the rebellious mind.

Then we may try *to expand our mental vision* in every direction beyond our usual field, like a star emitting its rays. It is impossible to describe the process *exactly*. Only analogies can be used. Intuition must help us if the effort is to be successful. If we cannot find the right way it may be a hint that the attempt is premature. Continuing, the consciousness should gradually expand, reach the limits of the solar system, then extend beyond the ultimate galaxies. All this should be embraced by our imagination *not from some definite viewpoint*, but as if it were *in us*, our consciousness enveloping every part of it.

If we are successful, then a new stage will be reached in which we become more than mere man with his limited range of awareness. If unsuccessful, descriptions will not help. And once we have reached the goal of such a meditation, no descriptions are needed.

Everything transitory remains in suspension and only the pure Essence of Life—the limitless, timeless, blissful Being, beyond all words or imagination—abides with one.

At the same time one sees that actually it is not any *outer* expansion of the field of vision, but a sort of DIVING INTO the hitherto unknown depths of OURSELVES, as the Master Ramana tells us.

This is an apparent paradox, expansion into infinity and at the same time, the diving into the depths INSIDE. The human mind's normal field consists of three dimensions plus that of time. But Reality is beyond any form of the mind's activity. Sankara states that Brahman is "Supreme, beyond the range of all speech, but which may be known through the eye of pure wisdom."

As far as I can see, a steady effort along these lines is the best means to find the "secret key" to *Viveka-Chudamani*.

We have to learn to think without words if we are still unable to subdue the entire thinking process. In this regard, the habit of verbalizing, often encountered even in highly intellectual men, is extremely obstructive. It *must* be abandoned.

If, as a result of the above exercise, the consciousness is able to merge into Infinity, the aspirant will find in due course that the world and senses disappear of themselves, without being artificially excluded for only a short time, as in the case of certain practices in some occult schools and Yogas.

Now we can understand why Sankara speaks so strongly of the unreality of the world and its appearance.

The eyes may be open or closed, the ears sealed or not; when the MASTER of the senses has abandoned them, they remain inactive. The body remains, as it always was, in the words of Sri Maharshi, an insentient block and nothing more. The foremost necessity of the halting of the mind's verbalizing has been clear to all initiates since time immemorial, as we can discover by studying the oldest scriptures of the East and West.

Easterners invented *JAPA*, the reduction of the mind's activity to one-pointedness by incessant repetition of a sacred syllable or sentence. In the West a kind of prayer was used with the same result. Success on this path does not include any visions or material ecstasies. In fact they must be avoided, being only another kind of *Maya*, illusion. Sri Maharshi directly warns us against all such visions, which are necessarily in duality (involving subject and object) and opposed to the truth of unity.

Spiritual treatises are not for reading. They are not literature as such. Their aim is to help in attainment, not to give mere mental understanding or to display the beautifully shaped verses of the Masters.

Therefore, when reading the incomparable *Crest-Jewel of Wisdom* we should realize its meaning, and in accordance with it, try mentally to become one with Infinite Space. This will pave the way to further steps leading to our spiritualization.

Once this supreme effort has been made, the door to *Samadhi* may stand open to us. This state is no longer a privilege of half-naked ascetics in the East, or of high priests, philosophers, Saints, and Yogis, as we might imagine. Attainment, being far above all exoteric religions and philosophic systems (if they are not given by the spiritual Master of the epoch in question), does not vary or choose men among some particular human organizations, which may have little in common with Absolute Truth.

The Maharshi told us that the attainment of the ultimate aim is equally possible in his *Ashram* as in a noisy London flat.

Sankaracharya tells us again that Realization also means the final liberation from *karmas* collected in "millions of *kalpas*" (an incredibly long time). These *karmas* are annihilated by the mere fact of the attainment of the ultimate aim.

When you are one with the Whole then no word, feeling, or thought can disturb you. You desire nothing.

You ARE—and in this everything is said.

Attainment is possible here and now: not for all, of course, but for those who are immature and unable to grasp the meaning of attainment "the question itself does not arise," as says Sri Ramana.

No occult mental gymnastics or artificially induced visions—exciting to many ignorant persons—can possibly lead man to his ultimate goal.

But only THAT which lasts for ever, unchangeable, unconditioned, inaccessible to the worlds of matter and their illusions.

And we can learn much about the first steps to IT from Sankara's exposition of one of the secret keys to attainment.

XXIX

Collective Study

> For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

There is no doubt that human beings influence one another when they are together for any length of time; but the strength of that influence depends upon various factors. Those that are of the greatest importance to the average man, are listed as follows:

a. *Positive:*
   I. Personal integrity of the individual.
   II. The power of mind, that is, clear and concise thinking.
   III. Depth of feelings.
   IV. A definite goal in life.
   V. Magnetism or quality of the *Prana* (vital energy) connected with physical health.
   VI. Education and ability to use it.
   VII. Inner and outer balance, cheerfulness.

b. *Negative:*
   I. Anxiety and nervousness.

II. Lack of peace of mind.
III. Sensuality.
IV. Aimless living.
V. Lack of cheerfulness.
VI. Fear.
VII. Bad *Prana* (health).

Of course, these are not full lists, and in both cases I to VII are given merely as examples; each student can complete them according to his own experience. The radiation of these invisible qualities affects our surroundings, for just as an electric current can induce another in a nearby conductor, so we can influence those around us. From this can be concluded that a wise person will carefully choose his environment, as far as it lies within his power.

When we reach a definite aim, such as spiritual study, the harmony and unity of that aim assume an imperative meaning. For subtle things need much more discrimination than purely material ones. It is unlikely that any harm would be done if, say, we ate a meal at a café table with unknown persons of different mentality and convictions, who are possibly unsympathetic toward us. But in spiritual matters things are different as we can easily recognize from our own experience. Every kind of organization—religious sects, societies, and so on—is a testimony to the innate instinct in men, *to join forces* in order to help the achievement of each individual member. This is in theory, and practice very often confirms the statement.

When a group of individuals try to meditate on a central theme, the concentration is much easier than if each member were trying to do it separately. By common thinking, the surrounding atmosphere becomes magnetized in a certain direction and saturated with the same sort of vibrations on the astromental level of consciousness.

The forces are as if mutually compensated: the power of the stronger members of the circle is available to the weaker ones, with undeniable profit for the latter. But the stronger do not lose anything—like a magnet, which can polarize many pieces of iron while its power remains unaffected.

Moreover, by uniting our efforts in the one direction, we act in accordance with the universal rule of unity of all Being.

Spiritual Teachers usually encourage assemblies of their devotees, as

we can see from the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. The Maharshi did not express any definite instructions in the matter, but all the time his disciples gathered freely round him to receive his *Darshan*, and he evidently recognized the fact as such. By a common study of spintual things the work becomes easier, and more enlightened ideas are then born in us.

From the foregoing we can appreciate that some selection of members should be made, and that those who *are unable to harmonize with the group as a whole must be discouraged from taking part in what for them is something with little or no meaning.* Likewise, those who delight in arguing, especially on the purely individual mental—that is, egoistic—plane are also of no use in a selected circle devoted to spiritual searching.

Regularity of meetings is also of great importance, because of the so-called magnetism of time, which then comes into consideration. This means that currents of thought have a tendency to return at the time at which they were created or fortified. The more use we make of these currents, the greater becomes their inclination to return to us. That is why meditation—especially for beginners, who need all available help —should be performed at definite times. Of course, very strong individuals can actually dispense with these conditions.

Masters, for example, do not seek any human society for themselves, but only contact us in order to give help on the Path. Their solitude and eternal peace cannot be disrupted by the worldly events that affect us. But, as average individuals in the search for Truth, we cannot afford to miss any opportunity that might assist us in our inner fight for freedom and bliss.

So it can be seen that well arranged and properly conducted meetings can be of great help to all earnest aspirants. The previously quoted saying of Christ tells us that the *Master supported the collective effort and study,* honoring them with His presence in spirit, which practically amounts to direct assistance.

There is little need to mention that members of such meetings very often feel and do experience for themselves all that has been said above.

But the possibility of degeneration exists, unless the participants exercise great care. Such groups or other organizations should be only a MEANS for the union, and should never be allowed to become a kind of impenetrable fence, dividing us from the rest of our brethren. This is

one of the most common mistakes committed by human beings since the beginning of our species on this planet. No great religion has been able to escape this curse, and the sense of separateness, imagined superiority, intolerance, hypocrisy, and fanaticism are easily born from the erroneous use of the idea of collaboration between men of similar convictions.

This must be avoided at all cost if an organization is to function properly and do good instead of harm.

On the present average level of spiritual development in both East and West, there is a very real and urgent need for some form of study having a social and collective character. This type of study would greatly help weak beginners, while at the same time be harmless for the rarer, strong (advanced) aspirants.

We should realize that, in helping others, we are also helping ourselves. And by assisting ourselves spiritually, we greatly contribute to the uplifting of our surroundings.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a significant saying of the Maharshi's, when early in 1911 an enthusiastic young English seeker came to him and bluntly asked how he could help the world. The Master replied quietly: "Help yourself and you will help the world."

The deep meaning of these words is equally valuable for everyone of us, because usually we all encounter the same questions, difficulties, and needed effort on the Path.

There are some periods on the Path when a disciple might feel the need to be absolutely alone for a while (as an anchorite or *sannyasin*). However, these exceptions do not undermine the general rules of the common effort in spiritual work and study for the overwhelming majority of contemporary men.

PART FOUR

Chapters XXX-XXXVI

Dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Brandler-Pracht

XXX

Before We Go

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE

Most of us leave this world without having acquired a clear or profitable understanding of the life that has passed, the universe that surrounds us, or even the very aim of our journey through this world.

It is true that the ultimate answer lies beyond the thinking faculties of our mind-brain. This answer cannot be conveyed like other acquired knowledge using the limited possibilities of the mind. It must come individually and be digested like food.

No one can possibly eat for us. We must do that ourselves, and no amount of food placed before us can substitute for our taking a loaf of bread and eating it ourselves. If food is not put before us, then there is no opportunity to use it. Likewise, ideas brought to our consciousness from the realm of the mind-brain play the same role as the food simile.

I have collected here some of the questions that usually arise when we try to find an answer to the problems that beset human life. The power of the mind is neutral, neither good nor evil, depending on how it is used. At night, electric light can be very useful, allowing us to work and live almost in the same conditions as daylight. But this same light put to a different use, such as in the pocket torch of a thief, allows him to find the objects he wants to steal. Without light he would be unable to commit his crime.

MATTER

Official science tells us that matter, as such, does not exist, because it can be converted into nonmaterial energy, which has no weight or volume, qualities that until recently were acknowledged as essential in defining matter. The "motionless" material atoms have been converted to miniature solar systems, composed of electric charges having none of the properties of matter. Consequently, our bodies, the most real part of man, as most of us believe, are scientifically not real at all in time and space, apart from the evidence of their perishable character. A logical sequence—and an important one—would then be, that the body is only the instrument of man. If so, then there must be something or someone who uses this instrument and yet remains independent of it. On this statement is based all the science of occultism, which is only practical and experimental psychology.

Realization of this is the beginning of the true search after the Wisdom of our own Being. When the belief in the reality of matter and all its manifestations, including that which constitutes our physical form, vanishes, then the belief in our nonmaterial and therefore indestructible essence dawns on us, and our point of view is irrevocably changed.

We realize that only this change in thought can bring us the first rays of the Truth, the true Light, independent of the transient conditions of our temporary material form. It also means, in practical terms, the immortality that is proclaimed often by the many religions and their founders.

THE UNIVERSE

The latest researches in astronomy, with the aid of recently built large telescopes, tell us that beyond our own galaxy of stars, called the Milky Way, there are at least a hundred million galaxies visible in space, though in distance many hundreds of millions of light-years from our own planet, and beyond them there is no empty space, so that stars and space are apparently bound together forever.

This is the language of our physical senses, sharpened and perfected by the complicated instruments that modern science offers to us. At the

same time science also made a very important and revolutionary discovery. Researches based on the work of Professor Einstein have shown that the light ray, until recently thought to follow invariably a strictly direct line, does not do so, and under some conditions may be bent, or curved. Enough potent gravitational fields, actually closely identified with magnetic fields, can influence the straight path of the light ray, making it quite different, that is curved.

To a thinker, this discovery is of immense importance. We see only what the light ray brings to our eye. From these visible forms are born all the conceptions of our outer mind-brain. The relativity of the phenomena we see and their apparent difference from the real state of things is evident in the following facts.

The stars we see in our telescopes, being millions of light-years away from our earth, can be subjected to different changes, some of them suddenly being resplendent, while at other times becoming dimmer, and even losing or changing their color and brightness. Changes can occur in stars as the rays emitted by them travel to us. But all this happened millions of years ago, and it took time for the ray of light to travel through the immensity of space. Now, these stars and planets may no longer be in existence, having been broken up by the innumerable collisions and inner changes observed by astronomers; but for millions of years to come men will see a state of things which, in reality, no longer exists, because our physical sense of sight still misleads us with its limitations.

The fact that the light ray can be curved brings to us the knowledge that things seen in space in the universe, can in reality be quite different. The stars are not, and cannot be, in the places where we apparently see them. The innumerable universes that we see, following the CURVED rays of light, cannot be observed when the light follows only a direct route.

Moreover, the curvature of the light rays can take different forms, dependent upon the various gravitational fields through which they must pass on their way. If the distances are great enough, the forms similar to our parabolas, ellipses, on even CLOSED CURVES cannot be excluded. And we know that these distances are really tremendous. So, if these things can and do happen, where is the dependability of our physical senses, and consequently, of our observations? And what then is reality? Is it what we believe we "see" in the immense universe?

Light is only one form of vibrations sent from the light-object to our eyes, which organs respond only to a limited number of them. We know that there are many other vibrations or radiations emitted by different elements in nature. Many of them are not visible to us, but some other beings with differently constructed organs could quite perfectly catch different kinds of vibrations. The inevitable consequence of this is that the world appears to be something quite different from that which might be perceived by other means of cognition.

As the appearance of the universe is dependent on the perception and personal tendencies of the man making the observation, that is, the onlooker, how can there be any "absolute" picture of the world, when presented to us by our five senses?

When our senses are taken from us by physical death, the physical universe as we see it now ceases to be an objective reality at all. This must be so, if we think correctly and logically. In consequence, one finds one's field of perception too narrow and impermanent. What was before will never return. It remains only on the film of our memory. When our brain cells, which play the role of the film, are destroyed, which is inevitable, the whole past ceases to exist. The present flows quickly, going further and further into that which is termed the future. But no frontier can be properly established between these three.

So of necessity there must be another point of view if we are to come closer to the existence and understanding of the Real, that is, the unchangeable. And this point of view does exist. It is, and can be, only the CONSCIOUSNESS that functions without limitations of conditioned tools, such as our five senses: consciousness that is unaffected by and quite independent of them.

To the search for this Consciousness are devoted many of those who wish to be free from so-called life and death.

REINCARNATION

The question is dual. If our life is still centered in our individuality or ego, then reincarnation is an accomplished fact, for the consciousness functions only on that level. Man considers himself a separate unit and he lives as such. His highest level of consciousness is that of mind, which is mortal. So birth and death are his fate.

When the man (microcosmos) transcends these and realizes himself as the Whole (Macrocosmos), or unique Universal Self, where is that which goes from birth to rebirth? Then the man is ripe enough to escape further experiences in the ego-life, for he has long ago left them behind. He has no further desire to live separately. The mysterious and inexpressible process of the union with the Real, the imperishable and unchangeable, takes the place of the former strivings on the periphery of the circle. Then the man is moving toward the center instead of outward.

It is interesting to note that even the question of reincarnation is excluded from, in fact does not arise in, the consciousness of an advanced person. It is only considered by the ego, which is anxious about its own fate, and not by the immortal man-spirit.

In all these cases, the best solution you can reach independently is to ask yourself: "Who is interested in all these things and problems?" Then even the mind will give the right answer, for, as we have heard and already know from the teachings of the Master, it is neither good nor evil. The mind will obey orders, although it likes to be endlessly active, and if the seeker cannot control these activities, it will be to his detriment.

KARMA

When in touch with some spiritual currents, many persons in both the East and the West believe that *this fact alone will suffice to* RECTIFY their *karmas* and almost immediately remove all their troubles, especially in everyday life. This is definitely wrong. Such an attitude arises from a hidden desire to obtain liberation from past debts at small cost to themselves. Of course it is only the ego that tries to commit such a trick. But it is impossible. The law of cause and effect cannot be changed from day to day just for the pleasure of the ignorant. The forces put into action on three planes of existence, that is, physical, emotional, and mental, to which the average human life is limited, must be counterbalanced. There is no escape as long as a man's consciousness remains limited to these three levels. The bliss comes from a different source for those who, still with unpaid karmic debts, have found the Path and definitely entered into the mystical current that leads to

final deliverance. Their true Self is already apart from their material sheaths. We know that many emiment souls, some of whom are considered as Masters, had formidable afflictions, at least in our eyes. But always they remained beyond them.

Mrs. Annie Besant in one of her essays said simply that "When an occultist (she understood this to be a disciple of a true Master) finds himself in almost unbearable conditions on this earthly plane, he takes refuge by transferring his consciousness to the higher level, then being only a witness and not an actor of his life's drama."

Therefore, the element of selfish desire to escape suffering by belonging to a given spiritual current or study must be eliminated if we truly wish to avoid any misconception and sure disappointment. Bravely endure what you must, knowing that all afflictions are only temporary, and never turn your sight away from the sublime goal of attainment. There is no other way.

Some kind of resignation from temporary things is necessary on the Path. "Be in the world but not of the world" was taught by a Great Master.

RIPENESS

There is no such thing as a conviction from outside, acting through the mind. If one is unable to accept the Truth at the present time, the best preacher or the most sublime message will remain without answer in the consciousness of the unripe person. That is why the Maharshi would not enter into any controversy or sterile discussion. If one cannot remember his true aim of life, he should be left alone. "What is not natural is not permanent," said the Master.

SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS

Generally, contemporary humanity is proud of its high mental level and logical approach to life; but this is a limited point of view. Short-sightedness is the common disease of our time, for men are afraid to push the beloved logic to the end. They can see only a very limited distance ahead. And accordingly, their strivings and aims in this life are

based on the harmful custom, falsely ascribed to the ostrich, of hiding their heads in the sand. And where is the cause? It lies in concentration of the attention on the visible physical things or, in some cases, on the products of their own imagination and theories, which have no contact with the true reality of things.

HUMAN RACES

The question of human races and their destiny is often raised. People like to talk about so-called equality, quoting frequently misunderstood words of many spiritual Teachers. If we are to grasp the real meaning of the words, they must be conceived much more deeply. It is true that some Saints and all the Rishis apparently made no distinction even between animals and men.

Remember the examples of St. Francis of Assisi and the Maharshi. They even spoke to the animals and in some ways treated them as human beings. Why? To the enlightened sight the unity of Life is an axiom. Such a sight perceives the one Source under the many different covers of flesh. In the human body, as in any unit of life, is a variety of cells, each having its different functions and destiny. The cells of our finger-nails and those of the brain, and so on, belong to the same body; but no one would identify himself with his nails although he might do so with his thinking apparatus. Sometimes, a comparatively small thing such as a septic finger may bring about the destruction of the whole body as a unit. But there is an unquestionable difference between the importances of the body's components.

When a Master looks on every manifestation of life with an equal eye, he never ascribes equality to these manifestations. If representatives of different races were to go to him, he would make no distinction, but at the same time he would speak differently to each man, according to the ability of understanding and level of development of each one.

Although the Maharshi spoke in one way to Europeans and in another to his own countrymen, the essence of his sermons was the same; only the form was different.

The races are like homes for different kinds of human consciousness (souls, if you like). From the point of view of evolution, one spark of consciousness may exist in the body of a New Guinea cannibal, while

another may live in the body of a cultured Westerner or Easterner. Bernard Shaw spoke truly when he said that, "a conversion of a savage to Christianity means only a conversion of Christianity to savagery," and so on. The best things need to be applied in the right time and place. Otherwise, they cease to be the best, at least for a while.

ONE SOURCE

There is no doubt that all races originate from the same one Source of Life, merely being its temporary homes. It is an unquestionable fact that in the universe the Life has an innumerable variety of manifestation. We on our little earth are able to perceive only an infinitesimal part of it. The variety always exists in forms. And only the Highest, the one Reality can know the cause of that fact. Philosophers and some Saints have tried to give an explanation, building many different conceptions. St. Augustine said that "God is Love. But the Love cannot be perfect if It is not returned. Therefore the Almighty entered Himself into the variety, so that all parts of Him might consciously be united in reciprocity of the Love."

I am quoting this conception only as an example, without ascribing any axiomatic value to it.

In Indian scriptures it is said that "a disciple should recognize the unity as a fact," but he is warned not to apply the rule to each manifestation of the outer world. This statement appears dangerous and could possibly lead to egoism and misunderstanding of relations with our neighbors. An example would be more enlightening. You may have different pets, but probably you would not give mustard to your cat, even if you use it yourself. The same cat may sleep in your bed, but it is doubtful that you would allow your pet goldfish or horse to do likewise. It appears to be reasonable to treat everything on its own merits. You may think of many more similar examples for yourself.

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves."

THEORY AND PRACTICE

If it does not use anything apart from a personal mental theory, not put into practice by its creator, a philosophic treatise has no meaning and cannot be applied by its students. The pages of such a book are

only sterile exercises for the mind and memory. Therein lies the cardinal difference between the Eastern and Western schools of philosophy.

If I only look at my car, polish its surface and wonder about its qualities, but do not ride in it, then it becomes practically useless to me.

Many so-called thinkers and poets have written beautiful words, but their lives have been wasted. They merely grasped ideas and forms from the surrounding ocean of mind and emotions like a gramophone record, which after all is widely different from the orchestra composed of living men, united in a conscious effort to produce a piece of music. Recordings are no substitute for personal listening to Paderewski or Toscanini's orchestra. Works of the personally immoral Voltaire, of the almost saintly Pascal, of the coldly enlightened Kant, who at least tried to live as he wrote, remain as literary treasures and have little more practical value for us.

But the teachings of Christ and Buddha, who actually did not write anything, and now of the Sage Maharshi, who wrote only a few highly concentrated treatises, are of a different kind, simply because they themselves were the living examples of attainment, which no one can deny.

TRADITION AND REALITY

There are cynically minded persons who would gladly deny what belongs to the thousands-of-years-old tradition of the ancient Great Teachers. Some say they were only myths, that their teachings may not be original, and so on. We may know that such skeptics are rather misguided men, but the doubt can still exist for our outer mind, although it is unreasonable if one takes the necessary time and toil to investigate the matter impartially. Such is not the case with the Maharshi. He taught basically the same as his forerunners, only in a different form appropriate for our epoch and present state of mental evolution. He explained once more the power of the Universal Love as preached by the Christ, showing WHY its absence is nonsensical and the root of every evil that distresses the present age. Also, the Maharshi underlined, as was taught by the Buddha, that spiritual ignorance is the source of all human misery and error.

He showed us by his whole life that the realization of the most

elevated human ideas about wisdom and happiness are not merely dreams. And, the most important thing for the twentieth century, no one can dare deny his, Maharshi's, existence. He was among us, and there are many still living who were happy enough just to SEE and HEAR him. His handwriting is extant and photos of him are throughout the world, being actual evidence and not merely fantasies of painters. An earnest seeker can easily follow how the Sage defied death and suffering, deliberately showing us the height to which humanity's true Being, Spirit, can rise.

PHILOSOPHY

True philosophy is none other than Life, and true Life is only a perpetual philosophy. Where there is no link between the two, there can be only sterile deliberations and hypocrisy, the scourges of the present epoch. Humanity is subconsciously seeking an exit from this stalemate. Innumerable sects try to convert and subdue men with their theories. But they are lacking the most important and vital thing, the authority.

They like to adhere to the letter of the word of some selected books, for they have no other source of the badly needed force that could affect a spiritual regeneration. All have the same point of departure, for they see Man as a separate material entity and so, beginning from the lower and wrong end, they must fail in their endeavors. But the Maharshi taught us to apply the search to the other, higher end. He knew, from his own experience, that man is not the body, just as the shell is not the oyster. After all, the interests of the shell may sometimes be diametrically opposed to those of its inmate.

This basic discrimination was used by the Rishi as the keystone of his revelation. He was sure—as sure as everyone is that two and two make four—that the unmerciful analysis performed by us upon our own Being must lead us to the discovery of our SELF. And this Overself is eternal, unattached to anything; that is, in consequence, it is absolutely free. As such it cannot be evil, or even good in our limited sense of the words. It is beyond all qualities, for they exist only in relativity, in the realm where comparisons are paramount.

Despite all this apparent abstraction, the philosophy of the Indian Sage is full of practical meaning and life, as he himself always was.

THE METHOD

For a beginner who seriously tries to investigate the revelatory teachings of the Maharshi, their depths may be apparently close to dizziness. But, as with every known science, steps must be made one after another, in a logical sequence. Leaps are useless. Usually, we cannot be transformed overnight, although there have been such exceptional happenings, but under exceptional conditions, created perhaps by *karma*. It is better for us not to hope for any such exception. If such be a fact, it will come of itself. To anticipate it would be a mistake leading to disappointment. And many of us are still too weak to survive such a disappointment and still preserve our zeal. So patience and care are indeed indicated.

DISCRIMINATION

We are fully entitled to seek after our greatest good, our *summum bonum*, though this so-called greatest good must be well understood, for if it interferes with the good of others it is only a blunder. And so, careful discrimination must be made before the full light of intuition illumines our inner world. Wise parents do not give their children everything they want, although the latter, in their ignorance, may think that their parents are ill-treating them. And we are still only children in the great school of life.

A CONDITION

Realization of the unreality of the physical world is a condition of Self-Realization. That which is in you feels itself strongly attached to the visible world and is just as unreal as the latter. In any case, you cannot maintain for ever that your personality, composed of body and

senses, is something real and durable, for you know that all these will inevitably perish in due time. Philosophically speaking, the real is only something that always persists.

What is only temporary is not real and we cannot possibly build any positive conceptions on such a mirage. For many of us, realization of the above is very difficult, and some cannot concentrate their attention on the fact at all. They would do better if they did not read these lines. Nothing can be of use to a human being, unless it is accepted by its deeper intuition.

DIFFERENCES

Often people want to know what changes occur in the consciousness of those who have realized the unreality of the visible, temporary life: how such persons can live in the world and apparently still take part in its activities, yet remaining undisturbed by them.

Moreover, it can be seen that such persons are not at all helpless or pessimistic while still being in their cage of flesh. The answer is simple: such persons are only witnesses and not the *attached* actors of the drama of life. Their lives are beyond the level of the average man or woman and they have an inestimable refuge on the higher, nonmaterial plane. Practically speaking, their attitude is that of a seer of the events, who knows that the time must come when the screen of the world shall become empty; but that, nevertheless, HE will continue to exist. That which knows and feels the above has no name or form. The realized one does not feel any real connection with his name or outer form. Therefore, he knows that the destruction or suffering of these transient things does not belong to himself. The question is purely *spiritual* and not material, therefore it is almost impossible to be expressed in speech.

This disconnection between form and spirit is steady and ever-present only in a perfectly realized being, that is, a Master. There are innumerable degrees of Realization. These differ one from another just by the depth of conviction of these persons in their own true Being and from the length of time in their everyday lives when their physical consciousness prevails, leaving the higher spiritual one as if in shadow. Of course, perfect Realization is free from such gaps. When we are able to

know this matter practically, we are eager to compare the two states to light and darkness, or to *conscious* and *unconscious* living. Simply, the periods when the consciousness was forgetting about the Self appear as *nothingness*, as lost time, as a void.

ELIMINATE THE GAPS

This is the key and proof, whether or not we have as yet penetrated into the Self. There arises in the disciple on the Path a firm, spontaneous knowledge that he should avoid by every means the gaps in his true consciousness, for in them he does not feel alive anymore. Now we have a better understanding of the foundation of the words of Christ and Maharshi, when they pointed out that *that* which we usually consider to be Life is actually only sheer illusion and is rather similar to death. These things must be LIVED and not only anticipated by our minds. The anticipation, no matter how pleasant and justified it appears to us, will be dimmed by the illusion of the so-called "circumstances" of life and the world.

Under favorable conditions we may be more inclined to think about deeper things, but in the turmoil of outer troubles we simply forget all about them, and identify ourselves with the *Maya* round us. This brings great suffering and uncertainty. So the way to happiness lies elsewhere.

SUFFERING

Suffering is not a natural state of the consciousness nor is it something sublime in itself. It only shows that there are faults present in us. Because the way to attainment and Realization of the Ultimate Truth of Being almost always leads through bitter experiences, the most experienced one is, therefore, one who has suffered much, and so at last learned the lesson of his errors. Such a person would not, of course, return to something that brings him suffering. Some rare persons know about this, but the majority do not. So, for our purpose, we can divide men into those who know and those who do not. That is why the highest path of the Rishis (Sages) of India is called the Path of

Jnana, or Wisdom. The seeds of this final Wisdom are subconsciously present in each of us. We differ one from another only by the amount of growth that this Wisdom's seed has *already* attained in us.

But Saints and Yogis know that the Way leads through experiences, that is, sufferings; therefore, some religions may sanctify suffering, as a *means* to the salvation, as they say, but not as an AIM in itself.

XXXI

Sleep and Death

We know that in the waking state our I or Self has three vehicles of expression for entering into contact with the outer world. Occult philosophy calls them the three planes. Our five senses are the organs that contact the physical world. If one of them is defective, then the range of sensations is limited. The world of sound does not exist for the deaf, but there is also a more subtle ocean of vibrations than that sensible to the physical senses.

Emotion, joy, and grief, and the innumerable shades of feeling between, all belong to the astral (emotional) plane.

The third group is the realm of thought. Remembrance of a play, the mathematical equation of Pascal's curve, projects of the future, and so on, form our world of mind. All that is expressed in word or thought belongs to the mental plane as well as unexpressed imaginings and conceptions.

We know that in our dreams we are not conscious of our physical body. It remains in a state of quiescence, though our consciousness is still present and our body does not cease to exist. We can say that in dreams we pass from the three-plane life to the two-plane. Normal consciousness could be represented thus:—

Physical + Astral + Mental = Waking State (3 planes).
Astral + Mental = Dream (2 planes).

There is another state and that is dreamless sleep. This is different again as we have no remembrance of it when we awake, although we still existed in it. It is a mysterious state and the three planes of consciousness mentioned above fail to describe that of deep sleep.

Consciousness of the Self as that of the whole Being has already been discussed in previous chapters.

Coming now to the state of physical death in which physical consciousness is absent, for its vehicle is undergoing disintegration, it neither feels nor receives any impressions from without, and is similar to the state of dream.

But the other two planes, what of them?

They persisted in dream when the functions of physical consciousness were absent. Is there not sufficient evidence to accept the fact that the consciousness may still manifest on the astromental plane, even after death?

So we can show the next equation as:—

Astral + Mental = Dream State.

Astral + Mental + Physical (that is waking state) − Physical Body = Death.

We see that the equations of dream and death are synonymous as regards the state of consciousness.

Recent observations of psychologists state that a dying person usually has an overwhelming feeling of falling into a deep sleep.

When asked about death, Sri Maharshi said: "Sleep is a temporary death and death is only a longer sleep." Fear of death is based on a twofold ignorance. First we believe that the instinctive (animal) urge to preserve life is our own will. In other words, we identify ourselves with the dying physical body. Secondly, the average man does not know with any certainty where he is going when compelled to leave the body.

Attachments to material life, sorrow in leaving surroundings, relatives and friends, even places where he liked to dwell, dominate his consciousness.

Sometimes we even try to prolong our dreams, refusing to face real or physical life. The analogy here is illuminating.

When we dream that we are in mortal danger, we try to avoid death in the dream just as we do in the waking state, but the very fact of

awakening ends the nightmare. Research shows that the same process takes place with the nightmare of physical death. Those who know come to recognize death as only a change in this waking state that we call life. They know that consciousness does not die.

Another illuminating analogy is that when we dream, we believe without any doubt that our dream experiences are real. We then have no knowledge of the superior state of waking, where the limitations of the dream world are nonexistent. We are unable to say to ourselves: "I am only dreaming, everything that I see here is an illusion." And if, as rarely happens, we are able to pronounce that magic formula, we immediately awake. Sleep is then impossible. Each individual can test this for himself, but it is not too easy. Occultists have spent long years trying to attain the solution of the mystery of dreams.

So it is with the awakening from this state of physical consciousness. If you know and affirm that there is an awakening from the dream we call physical existence, you are freed from all fears and perhaps near to the inexpressible truth of existence.

To achieve this means passing into a new state of consciousness in which death does not exist any more. This state cannot be imagined by the mind, for only experience of it can convey its reality. There is a logical proof: when going upstairs, one foot cannot be raised from the lower step until the other has found support on the higher. We cannot remain suspended in space. So, when transferring the consciousness into the higher realm, it has to find some definite basis in the higher before we can leave the lower. Here is the answer to those who ask: "If there is another more real world, WHY can't I see it in this one? If there is no death in that one, why do I have to die here?"

The aims and efforts of such persons have been concentrated here on physical life. How many endeavor with the same concentration to discover the Real? If we wish to achieve anything, we first have to make the attempt, and the greatest of all possible achievements—the resurrection from the deadly dream in matter—is that to be gained cheaply?

Knowledge of the unreality, the impermanence of the visible world, is part of the process of seeking our Real Self.

Mental acceptance of that as fact is not sufficient.

Every step of progress must have a sure foundation and also the goal of our efforts must be known.

XXXII

Life and Death

What meaning has that which you call life? Are these only a limited number of years you spend now? The experiences you may have during those years are flowing away with time and never return. If you are able to follow the processes in your consciousness, you will find that every day you are different in some way. Where is the source and where is the end?

One may say: "These are my birth and death." But such definitions are meaningless. They are only words and little more. Because we know nothing of the true Life, we cannot know anything about death. As says the Maharshi: "Ignorance is truly your primordial sin. There is nothing else." Practically, this ignorance presents itself as a conviction of a separate being in a separate form, which ultimately means none other than the body. All circumstances in which we are living affect only that bodily form or its derivatives. Because man usually knows nothing more, the world—which is just the sum of the circumstances in all their varieties and forms—has the power, as you believe, to affect you, to make you happy or miserable. Truly, there is little satisfaction in such a conception. The first broodings about it are rather pessimistic ones.

But after all, it is really not so bad, for there is in us a Power which can lead to quite a different outlook. If not, then all our lives would be only a malicious jest of an unknown and cruel creator, if any. In order to know this Power, we should do the same as a child does who wants to see what is on the table above its head. The child simply stands on a chair and raises its head beyond the top of the table. Only then can it see the sweets on the plate. The efforts of a man striving after the knowledge of life and death are similar. When his consciousness surpasses the temporary and evanescent, he then finds the Eternal and

Real. He ceases to call himself his bodily form and to consider as his *summum bonum* (greatest good) the interests of his body-personality. He seeks after wider horizons.

He understands that there is no truth in theories expressed by men who have never raised their consciousness beyond that of the visible material personality. The writings of such men about spiritual, emotional, mental, and similar things are only delusion for themselves and for those unfortunates who believe their words, bewitched by their clever deliberations and often faultless outer form of such writings.

You can try an experiment. Analyse the actions, strivings, and aims of your everyday life. For whom are they? And you will immediately find that all thoughts and activities are always bound to the bodily existence, if not your own at a given moment, then to that of other human beings with whom you are connected in one way or another.

Even those who pretend to act for the benefit of their relatives, society, nations, and states, are thinking only of the forms and not of the essence, which is unknown to them. They seek for support in different scriptures. As if dead words could replace the living truth of existence!

To truly understand the Life means not less than to be that Life. Nobody could say that such an attainment is an easy one. Not at all! But the fact that some have found the source of Life implies the possibility for others. There are, here and now, deep-thinking souls, who are seeking after ultimate and not evanescent things. Before a man comes into touch with an exposition of the Ultimate, he cannot possibly know the Life, unless he is one of the fortunate ripe souls.

The foregoing lines are for just such persons, not for those who are spending their lives on fruitless speculations of the mind, building different theories, and failing to seek after the unmistakable experience for themselves. If I possess only a large screwdriver, all my efforts to repair a fine watch will be frustrated. If I hope to discover something that lies far beyond the limits of my thinking faculties, my hope is in vain. The only way is to get a watchmaker's precision tool, that is, to develop and enlarge my faculties.

Life, as we usually understand it, begins with birth and finishes with physical death. That is all that we know. The firefly suddenly comes from outer darkness into a room, circles it, then leaves the same way. From where to where?

Only the tombstones are witnesses to the ephemeral existence. Some would say that there are other traces: the works, books, discoveries, and so on, left by men. But all such things are only other forms of tombstones, with a slight difference, that they can be useful for other fireflies, for the same momentary period of their existence as such.

One with a more philosophical mind seeks for something better and deeper. Those who have found it tell us that the discovery of the true meaning of life invariably brings knowledge of so-called death. The first cry of the newly born child and the last painful breath of a dying person are just those moments of arrival and departure of the firefly. But the darkness is only apparent. There are those who know that there is no darkness at all. The teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi are authoritative instructions on how this may be discovered. These teachings are not unique, for there have been similar ones in the past and there will be similar ones again in the distant future, although perhaps in a somewhat different form.

But for those who are living just now, in the time of his revelation, these teachings are the most appropriate, because they are directed to *the present* level of human evolution, and because in this age of science they are so analytical and scientific, not being based on dogmas but on personal experience.

The way to the discovery of the secret of life and death invariably leads through such experiences. Nobody can open your mind or heart and put in it part of his acquired wisdom, just as no one can possibly replace your process of building blood cells with that of his own. But the instruction can be given.

Many think that by the sole fact of belonging to different sects and religions they are in a position to get enlightenment. They go to temples and churches and pay contributions and enroll themselves in different organizations, believing that these bodies will do all the necessary inner work for them. Really, as it was said thousands of years ago: "Human stupidity has no end or bottom," and "Against stupidity the gods themselves are fighting without success."

On the other hand, some of those who found Truth in the past did not formally cease to be members of their former religions or other organizations, for they did not want to deprive the masses—unable to follow such a thorny path—of primitive beliefs, necessary as a brake against immorality and vice.

One Western occult Master said: "When a man sacrifices his physical life, and overcomes the fear of death, that is the best proof that he bears immortality within himself."

Those who have performed the greatest deeds of courage and defied death often say that in those moments they were as if apart from their bodies, ready to leave them at any moment. When I can leave something, I am surely not the object I leave. There is the key to the mystery.

When alive, our conditions and experiences are different, and it must be the same in the so-called death. Therefore, all attempts to describe the after-death conditions are useless and even illogical. As everyone has his own individual life, so his death will also be individual. I am speaking here only about the average human being, who has not yet discovered the mystery of life, and therefore is subjected to the differences of both life and death. But on the highest level, when the realization of the Life (also called Realization of the true Self) is reached, then there are no longer any differences. Apparently, then, the enigma of both states should be solved on that supreme level. Yes, it is so; but only for those who have reached the eternal Reality, as says Sri Sankaracharya in his *Viveka-Chudamani*. So you who want the answer, you have only one way, to try to follow the Great Beings. The Maharshi pointed out the Way through his own life, and the Christ said to us: "I said you are gods."

Unfortunately, too many of us do not know it, and hence behave like animals. The famous contemporary philosopher, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry, said: "Only when you transcend the human realm, do you become truly 'men.'" That is no paradox; but what he calls man is infinitely higher than an average human being. But the Perfect Man, the Christ, did He not call himself a Son of Man?

In the Gita it is said: "The Sages are not affected by life or death." Realize this, and you will solve the problem of both.

XXXIII

Darkness in Death

The condition of darkness that may surround the average human being after leaving the physical body was often referred to in the secret teachings of many occult schools. I would not care to approach this question if the Master Maharshi himself had not expressed an opinion. But he did, although he was extremely unwilling to give his disciples any theoretical teachings that they could not possibly experience for themselves.

He always told us that first we should know our own true Being, and then all questions would resolve themselves.

Speaking about sleep and death, the Rishi once said: "Death is only a longer sleep." From this statement we can extract many logical explanations.

We are in truth the Consciousness itself and nothing more. A particular form of the Consciousness, that of the waking state, is known to everyone.

When in the waking state, we are usually convinced of the reality of our own Being, which is composed of three bodies or elements, also called planes, that is, physical, emotional (astral), and that of thoughts (mental), all of which are closely bound up with our bodily functions. We come into contact with the physical world by means of our five senses. If one of them is defective, that is if we are deaf, blind, dumb, and so on, that aspect of the world remains closed to us. A defective brain makes any normal thinking impossible. This is a fact that nobody can contest. These failings can only affect one whose consciousness is limited in its expression to the above-mentioned planes of being. Unfortunately, this applies to the overwhelming majority of people and so for them arise the questions about the states that follow death. A

few, who have transcended these three planes and consciously entered into the next, which is independent of them, have no questions at all, for they have a different means of cognition, which is beyond the reach of the mind.

What really is death? If we believe that it is not the ultimate end of Being, then the passing away should be merely like a stripping of the three conductors previously mentioned. And what remains after that stripping? Deep thinkers know that everything in nature is perfectly logical and that the state of death cannot be a process of adding something to our consciousness, for from where could it come if it did not exist before? Rather, that it is far more likely to be a process of subtraction, by which the perishable elements (physical, astral, and mental) used in the worldly life are taken from us.

Those who have been involved in so-called spiritualism, which is occupied with alleged communications with the "spirits" of deceased men and animals, know the amazing fact that those spirits cannot give us any knowledge beyond what they themselves possessed while still living on the earth, although sometimes professional mediums, for reasons of personal gain, deliberately produce extraordinary messages that puzzle their audiences. But if a seance could be strictly controlled to avoid any possibility of fraud on the part of the medium, then a serious and thorough investigator might come to the conclusion that all he heard was really already hidden in the unexplored depths of his own mind.

So no one except irresponsible and fanatically blind folk would seek for illumination from the other side through the so-called spirit messages, etc.

We may compare the Consciousness to light. The more we are conscious, the more light there is. If in this life our light has been limited to the three planes, as it necessarily is for the average man, then the subtraction of these three planes must inevitably bring the limitation of that light in us. This occurs when the mind is absent in deep sleep, for then we have no knowledge of our existence and only recover it upon awakening. That is why the Maharshi compared death to a longer sleep. But in this life there are really very few persons who in one or another form have not transcended—albeit for a brief period—the level of the limited three-plane consciousness. Ecstatic moments of happiness and love as well as those of deepest grief—when

we are ready to renounce everything on earth together with our intensely suffering personality—are just the moments when we are beyond these limitations. Of course, such things are *involuntary* and a man cannot repeat them at will. But in every case they are the first glimpses of something superpersonal, called the wider consciousness, which is above the usual, everyday one.

The subtraction performed by death cannot reach these moments of light, because they are just beyond the three bodies. And that is all we can take to the other side, the only light that will illumine the darkness of the grave. Analyzing ourselves, we may be in a position to define *how much* will remain and how much will be taken from us when we pass away. I will not enter into particulars here for they are highly individual and therefore cannot be described as a set of rules. Many theories have been put forward in these matters, even by the so-called clairvoyants and Theosophists, but in such cases all of them are observed from the individual point of view by the person concerned. What was true for them may not necessarily be obligatory and real for another person, and may simply be unreal for them. Therefore, we may consider these things as unsatisfactory for us, if not misleading.

Now we can realize why the Master always insisted that we have to find out the Wisdom for ourselves, for only then will it be a living truth. And that is all that counts, unless we wish to err indefinitely in the realm of baseless dreams and theories.

So, the after-death state must depend upon the thoughts and actions of our earthly life. Religions tell us in a blunt form that death may be followed by a heavenly or hellish life, that is, one of happiness (light) or suffering (darkness). As we see, there is some truth in such teachings, although of course only a relative truth.

Now we are in a better position to realize why the advanced beings, the Masters and some of their disciples, are so concerned with absorbing as much of the Light as is possible in this life.

For that is the only treasure of which death cannot rob us. I can but quote the words of Christ, who advised us: "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What is Self-Realization, spoken of by the Great Rishi? What is the *Samadhi*, so desired by our Eastern brothers? Are they not the attainment of the imperishable, inextinguishable level of consciousness in us? The true Light, which we may take with us into the darkness of human death? If the darkness is illumined by the Light, it ceases to exist. Since death is the darkness ("a long sleep"), where will we find this dreaded nightmare, this phantom that apparently expects us all, if we possess the Light? Now we can understand why the Maharshi so often said that there is really no death for him who has enlightened his consciousness to the last dark corner.

When the famous poet, philosopher, and mystic, Goethe, was dying, his last words were "Light! more light!"

The removal of the darkness that follows death means none other than the *actual removal of the darkness during this life*. It is the only reason why we have to live these ephemeral lives: to extract from them that which must be extracted, the imperishable Light.

The impression of one who experiences *Samadhi*, the Supreme Consciousness, is just that of an ocean of light. Sri Maharshi, describing the state of *Samadhi*, tells us that "in it the mind ceases to exist, being dissolved in the light of the Self." Some persons who had the privilege to sit at his feet knew that they could perceive the radiations of the Master, which they compared to an invisible, immaterial light. This Light illumined the realm of darkness for them and then there was no death when they were merged in his Light.

However much the darkness of the subsequent physical-personal life dimmed it, the remembrance could never be erased. And that was the very seed sown by the Master in their souls. The Christ compared this to the seeds falling on different soils, stony, dry, and fertile.

Dependent upon the particular case, the seed could grow or perish, that is, be forgotten in the squalor and noise of everyday life. The Great Teacher of the Gospels often speaks of the darkness and death as being synonymous.

". . . And Light will be in you, and the darkness will not swallow it. . . ."

Let us be armed with this invincible weapon, this light of the true Self, Existence, Spirit, or God (these are all synonymous) and we can repeat with the Prophet Isaiah, "Oh death, where is thy sting?"

XXXIV

The Last Thought

For every reader of this book as well as for its author there will come the time when we will have our last contact with this visible and tangible world. I am speaking here about physical death. Sometimes it is compared to a journey into a little, or rather, quite unknown land. Anyway, every reasonable man should agree that it pays to know something about such a journey. The importance of the last thought in consciousness preceding the extinction of all the functions of the brain of a dying person has been well known to many occultists and religious leaders since ancient times.

Buddhism in the East and the Roman Catholic and Greek-Orthodox churches in the West openly recognize the overwhelming significance for departing humans of what their minds are tuned to before the unconsciousness—which usually ensues for some length of time after the physical death of an average person—stops all movements of their thoughts and feelings.

In Buddhist rituals and sermons administered by a genuine lama-priest to assist a dying person, we can easily discover that efforts are directed to divert the person's mind from all temporary, earthly things, which for him are rapidly becoming unessential.

Sitting by the deathbed, a wise lama gently points out the future, nonmaterial life, following the departure from the visible world of the senses. In order to purify the mind of the dying, he speaks about virtues of the great Lord Buddha, who showed the way leading to the perennial bliss of Nirvana; about the Light, illimitable and inaccessible for the senses, that realm of the final and Eternal Peace, which is the lot of the good and the wise, and so on.

He diverts the thoughts of the dying from material and family affairs, telling him that all of them will soon be nonexistent for him. Finally

the lama whispers in the man's ears that if now he will think only about the splendors of Nirvana, they will be his reward.

Lafcadio Hearn in his delightful legends about Japan describes a case in the far-off past of that country, when a *samurai* condemned one of his servants to death for an offense that apparently was not grave enough to warrant such a punishment. The hapless slave felt the injustice of his lord very bitterly, and just before the execution announced that, after his death, he would take his revenge on his cruel master. The master's family and other servants were terrified, as they knew about the irresistible power of realization that belongs to the last thought of a dying person.

But the *samurai* himself was unperturbed by the threat. He simply told the doomed man that he would not believe in his power of exercising any posthumous vengeance, unless he could prove his ability. "I can show it to you!" cried the servant as he knelt before the block. "Very well! In the moment when your head will roll, cut off by my sword, let it bite the steps on which the block stands. Then I will know that you are not lying to me." "I will, I will bite them!" cried the condemned man. A sudden flash of the sword, the head falls off and rolls down, and for a moment it catches the stony step with its teeth.

The witnesses were horrified, for in this they saw proof of the coming vengeance from the other world.

But the *samurai* merely smiled and said, "Do not worry! The last thought of the culprit was just to bite the step. He performed it, and therefore he cannot do anything more." And there were no disturbances in the house connected with the dead man's threats.

So runs the age-old legend, showing the firm belief in the power of the last human thought.

The final rites administered by both of the previously mentioned Christian churches are, on broad lines, similar to the Buddhist ones. Relatives surround the dying person and into the hands, crossed on the breast, they place a burning wax candle that has been used in the last Resurrection Service of the church. They burn incense, read prayers for the dying, and if a priest is present, he gives the departing soul the last absolution, while telling him about God, in Whose presence he may soon stand; about Christ's grace and mercy for the repentant, and so on. There is no room here to quote the last rites

extensively, but everyone can investigate these things for himself by reading the breviary used by clergymen for that purpose.

We will now pass to another point of view, that of an occultist, who likes to know more about these matters.

So the *magnetism of the last thought* attracts the consciousness of the deceased person into just the region that corresponds to that thought. Just as in the physical life you can dive into a desired area of water, so in your death you may be able to find yourself where the realizing power of your last conscious effort was directed.

It is hard to add more to this simile without delving into a very special study of the mysteries expounded in the XIIIth *Arcanum of the Tarot*, which is not the aim of this chapter.

Nevertheless I would like to mention, for those interested, that the varieties of deaths and subsequent states can be discovered by dealing with the equations arising from the analysis of the 13th card of the Tarot. This is similar to the numerical operations of all aspects of the figure 13. For example: $13 = 1 + 12$. To an initiated Hermetist this equation reveals much: for he knows the mystical meaning of every number from 1 to 22. To each of them corresponds a definite Major Arcanum or Trump of the *Tarot*, hiding a key to the idea of the particular card. For our present use, by reading the symbols we discover: "death" or "transformation" (the 13th Trump) signifies: the individual (1st Trump) compelled to sacrifice his earthly life for another form of existence (the 12th Trump).

As you may easily guess, these equations are the source of new conceptions, formed from quite definite and exact ideas, based on man's own experience, acquired by his mind: $13 = 2 + 11$; $13 = 3 + 10$, and so on. Later come other forms of equations operating with the same 13th Trump of Death, such as: $13 - 1 = 12$, $13 - 2 = 11$, etc.

Now take ALL the 22 Major Arcana of the *Tarot* and imagine only the incredible number of combinations possible by using them as exact and definite bases for ideas and abstruse conceptions. All of them will be quite logical and scientific, if you know the *Tarot* and the true meaning of its cards and symbols.

Although the *Tarot* is of great attraction for many purely intellectual occultists, it does not hold much interest for earnest seekers of a higher class, that is, for those who aspire after the spiritual, unchangeable

truth of Being. For the truths that an attentive and gifted student finds with the help of the Tarot's system of philosophy are ONLY RELATIVE TRUTHS.

They deal with man and the universe as far as both appear to be visible and sensient. Nevertheless, the field of investigation made with the help of the *Tarot* extends much further, and lies beyond the physical plane, reaching into the astral and mental regions.

However, this system cannot lead us directly to the immortal and illimitable Absolute, to the CORE of that which we call man on this earth. This is not to forget that Hermetic wisdom *ultimately* points to the supreme, unknowable, eternal, and all pervading Ain-Soph, which we may accept as corresponding to the *Atman*, God, Father, or the Advaitic Supreme Self, as expounded by the Maharshi.

But this highest peak of the *Tarot's* conception is merely an abstruse term, mentioned briefly, having no evident life in itself, and therefore of little use to us. There are better means.

If I had to summarize and define the meaning and place of the system of thought enclosed in the *Tarot*, then the ALGEBRA OF OCCULTISM would seem to be the most suitable description. And its value cannot be denied.

In one way or another a man should, when considering his eventual passing away, do something in order to secure for himself the best possible conditions in the land of the unavoidable beyond. I do not doubt that the best preparation for death is none other than *a well and wisely spent life here on the earth*. But the problem of how to do this is not at all easy to solve practically. How many of us are able to become Saints?

Nevertheless the technique of the last thought is alone so useful even for the not-too-well-prepared person that it is worthy of our attentive consideration. In the *Tarot* philosophy we find a strange statement: "You must die every day if you want to live." Its meaning is that one has to be prepared to leave the physical life *at any moment*.

Christ mentioned much the same idea when he advised us to be ready and watchful for we know neither the day nor the hour when our time will come.

Effort is necessary to achieve this readiness and express it by consciously directing the last thought in a proper way. We cannot get

something for nothing, even in regions much higher than this earthly plane. It is well to remember this.

Such is the law, and nothing can change it. He is indeed lucky who actually understands this Law and lives accordingly.

1. *In the beginning,* during each day (the best times being morning and evening) one must quietly imagine oneself leaving the present physical body, that is, dying.

   A good, mentally vizualized symbolic conception would be that of a bird, leaving its nest and flying into free space.
2. *Become acquainted* with the idea of abandoning your body, seeing it as if *from above,* creating the feeling of nonattachment to it. Such simple but effective exercises will gradually become deeply rooted in your SUBCONSCIOUSNESS. I deliberately say SUBCONSCIOUSNESS and not consciousness: For it is much easier to accept mentally any theory and impose it on our everyday *waking awareness* than to *PASS IT INTO A DEEPER LEVEL.*
3. This is because, when operating with mental theories of separation from the body and survival after its death, omissions are possible and very probable, especially when death comes suddenly and unexpectedly: an accident on the street or elsewhere; drowning, a heart attack, or some other catastrophe.
4. But when the effort reaches the realm of man's *unmanifested consciousness,* this subconscious element at death will take over the duties of its conscious brother, which is then in difficulties or oblivious under the impact of death's shock. It is essential to have a clear and firm grasp of this fact if you want to take full advantage of your last thought when the fateful moment comes for you.
5. *How can you obtain* the desired result? Only by adequate exercises. Every day when you have an opportunity of being alone, or in a quiet and undisturbed position for a few minutes, as realistically as possible imagine yourself dying in an accident, for example. Then try *to remember your last thought* just as you had decided to do in such a case. Do not think about anything else.
6. *What kind of thought* should be chosen? Just something that uplifts you, gives you inner peace and hope, and quietens the disorderly thinking of your mind.

   Any given example will be of no definite value because the last

thought should be chosen by a man himself after careful deliberation about the whole matter.

7. But general suggestions can be offered: they have been taken from sources that have proved most helpful in such cases.

   a. A very short prayer or uplifting sentence may be suitable for many who have some difficulties in the creation of vivid mental images. For this type of last thought your heart's voice should always be consulted.

   b. The image of an Ideal Being whom you revere and adore above all else. It *cannot be any ordinary human being* such as a member of your family, a friend, and so on. Such a choice would be of no use or help. But if you are a believer, then Christ, Buddha, Maharshi, or a great Saint known to you from books and so on will be a suitable choice. If you have had the rare privilege of being a devotee of a spiritual Master whom you have encountered in your lifetime, or even only heard of through the medium of books and pictures, then a *last thought directed to him* with love and surrender will bring his presence to you in your final moment of leaving this life. To others this fact will not be visible, but for you, a glorious reality. He will then guide you through the initial darkness of death, and his light will dispel every shadow around you. There is no need to say anything more.

   For other persons who, in their minds, are able to conceive the Unique Absolute Being as the only reality and basis of this temporary universe, a thought accordingly formed will serve them best.

After having read the foregoing everyone should be in a position to choose and to create his *last thought* for himself and therefore to begin to exercise with it. It will richly repay him when the time comes.

Gradually the exercise will pass into a habit, that is, become impressed on the subconscious part of your mind. It would be especially useful for you to use the exercise as your *last thought* before falling asleep every night. This is a practice to be recommended and it will greatly reward the effort.

To conclude here are some final warnings:

Your choice of a last thought should never be that of any living or deceased member of your family, friend, acquaintance, or other AVER-

AGE human being. Such an unwise choice will be *of no help to you* in your supreme moment; but it will create a lot of trouble for both parties. If he or she is still alive when you die, this person may get a shock that can take different unwanted forms: a direct (often fearsome) apparition; troublesome sounds; feelings of depression or fear; even, in some cases, direct damage to mental or physical health.

If the person had predeceased you, he or she may be attracted by your effort, realized in your last thought of which you already know the power. This person may also feel a shock, and in any case his peace will be greatly disturbed by earthly remembrances. The whole responsibility will rest with you, and it is no good to enter another world by creation of a karmic debt in the first moment.

In such a case, of course, the operator gets no advantage for himself. He might be thrown onto the astral level where he will find himself amongst beings and things far from pleasant, to say nothing of obtaining any help from them.

This is simply because we are ignorant and not yet pure enough, since we are not free from the imperfections common to every AVERAGE or ORDINARY human being.

The wise one knows about this and leaves these things alone. There are competent forces that deal with newcomers into the vast worlds beyond our earthly plane. Apart from all that has just been said, *only spiritually advanced beings* have full consciousness in ANY condition of any world, different from that in which we live when in the waking state. They are also endowed with powers that allow them to exercise help for us, especially at the time of our passing away, death.

The first Christian martyrs and confessors were not afraid of death or even torture, because they were in spiritual unity with their Master. Their faith in Him was perfect, and where is there a power greater than true FAITH?

I have seen simple, uneducated persons who, when dying, were astonishingly serene and fearless: in all their simplicity they had a naive but strong faith. The Supreme Power never disappoints or abandons those who put their faith in it. This fact is well known to all true occultists.

And I have also seen highly intellectual persons who spent their lives studying all kinds of philosophy and theories about the life after death, but who nevertheless did not achieve any spiritual realization.

How different and troublesome, full of doubts and confusion were their last moments and hours on this earth. I will give a striking example:

In his early writings Leo Tolstoy admired the faith and serenity of his old peasant-nurse, manifested when she was dying. She firmly believed that Christ would take her soul into His care. But when this famous writer and philosopher, who knew a lot about Yoga, felt his end approaching, he hastily left his home in great distress and tried to reach a then well-known holy old monk, an ascetic, who lived hundreds of miles away in East Russia. Stricken on his journey by a mortal sickness, Tolstoy soon died in the modest room of the master of a small railway station without achieving his aim. His last words were: "Ah, now it is the end. But there is nothingness, only nothingness." And death closed his lips forever. That was all he took with him after almost eighty years of life.

XXXV

Eternity

This term is used freely, but what real and definite meaning has it for us? We know something of the three subdivisions of time in which we are supposed to live. So let us take some of the simplest examples.

Yesterday I received a lot of letters; it was in the most recent *past*, while ten years ago I traveled widely throughout Eastern countries: that was a more remote *past*.

Fifty years ago I was a little boy and this period is deeper still in the same *PAST* than were the former examples. And what about me, say, some seventy years ago? I was not on this earth and all the years prior to my birthday are practically nonexistent for me.

Everyone can recall examples for himself, thinking them through carefully in order to realize that the actual past of a man is a limited

and measured quantity in comparison with the independent conception of the PAST as it is.

What lies beyond OUR past does not belong to us, but to some others. For the purpose of further analysis we may use a wider term for the past, namely BEFORE.

To-day at this moment I am writing this chapter. In reality it is MY present time. But can I define *it* exactly?

Writing, like all other activities possible to us that we refer to as being in the *present*, that is, thinking, walking, reading, speaking, and so on, is always as if balanced on the razor edge of time. A word once written, spoken, or thought immediately belongs to the PAST of our BEFORE; while the next words emerge from the FUTURE (which we may also call AFTER) in order to become the immediate PAST.

Our knowledge may extend itself fully only for just this razor-narrow bridge between the past (before) and future (after). We may know a lot about the first, but of course not the WHOLE past of all beings like ourselves, to say nothing of the innumerable other different forms of life. We may foresee, in certain circumstances, something of the future. We know with certainty that after to-day there will be to-morrow; after 1958 will come 1959, and so on, presuming of course that the planet and its thinking population will exist long enough and at the particular time. This is a condition, but usually we do not give it much thought.

Similarly, everything that belongs to our assured—as we believe—future consists more or less of certain guesses, which can also go wrong if something happens that we could not foresee.

As a logical conclusion of all this we have to recognize that we can master only that narrow edge between two infinities: the eternal BEFORE and the eternal AFTER.

The aim of this chapter is to help the student to assimilate the idea, which is SUPERIOR to the three subdivisions of time known to us. It is that of ETERNITY. There is no need to ascertain for ourselves that Eternity must enclose within it the whole of time along with all its modifications. Because of its lucidity and simplicity, I will use here a scheme known to Hermeticists. This does not mean that everyone will easily master the true idea hidden behind it, or will even necessarily come to the realization of that great conception of Eternity. I am not

speaking here of any verbalized mental understanding (because such is practically useless for man), but just of the true realization of the idea, which then becomes a living experience and truth for us. It is most important to have a firm grasp of this fact.

A certain degree of the power of concentration is necessary. Those who have successfully passed through a special training of their mind will be the ones most capable of making such an effort. An adequate course for control of the mind has been given in one of my previous books, *Concentration*. In such a case the student will have little if any initial difficulties in the present task.

Draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper, marking its ends A and B. Over A write BEFORE and over B AFTER. Then in the middle of the line A-B draw a perpendicular one, marking the end above the horizontal line C and that below, D. Above C write NOW (known), and under D NOW (unknown). The whole figure will then be similar to a cross with the letters A, B, C, D and their appropriate inscriptions. The point of intersection between A-B and C-D we will mark with the letter O. Now let us analyze our symbolical figure.

In every moment of life we are practically always at the point O on the NOW line. We reached this point somewhere from the direction of the A, that is from the BEFORE. We are going, as we believe, in the direction of B, to the AFTER. Every moment of our life apparently shifts us farther and farther from A, pushing steadily toward B. But we are NEVER actually able to abandon A and still less to reach B. This is because, at a certain time, the point O encounters something that puts an end to the whole of the wandering of our NOW. We simply die.

This is not the place to delve into future happenings and so we will only try to elucidate what we can obtain before the end of our present incarnation.

Now look at the figure of the cross ABCD again. First take the past, the BEFORE arm of it. Recollect what this arm of the cross meant to you. Line AO is your PAST. Think about it on the broadest possible lines, following the chronological order in reverse from NOW to your earliest years, boyhood, childhood, as far back as you can. Stop at the very earliest recollection that you are able to recall, no matter how incomplete it may appear to you. It is your limit of the BEFORE line, but you surely know that this before is

actually receding much farther back than you can remember. Then try to ENCLOSE your whole picture of the past in one short, clear-cut conception, calling it BEFORE. Evoke this picture of the past in your mind and associate all of it in the single idea of before so that you become familiar with this type of exercise.

When this has been done, return to the point O and think of the line *O-B*, your AFTER, your future. Imagine it as you might expect it to be, but do not follow it to the very point of death, although that will, of course, encounter you some day, somewhere on the line *O-B*. Associate all of this with a firm conception of AFTER. Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a still closer explanation of the current in your consciousness, which should occur after these experiments. You must have some intuition, born from the ability of concentration, otherwise I cannot see much success for an unprepared person.

All of this will certainly take a number of sessions, and a lot of effort. But it pays as you may be able to see for yourself.

When "BEFORE" and "AFTER" are strongly established in your mind, come back to the point O, your NOW. From IT mentally look at both past and future simultaneously. Fix them in your consciousness, *without any words or thoughts*; only distilled, pure ideas should result from these somewhat strange proceedings. Immediately you succeed in this work, realize that both before and after actually coalesce and vitalize your NOW, your present, which you believe you are living through. A triple conception now arises, united in one idea, but beyond all movements of the outer mind. You contemplate it in the present. It is: BEFORE—NOW—AFTER *as a unit*.

And this is Eternity, containing all the three subdivisions of mortal time, and yet being far beyond and above that time. Eternity reigns in silence and peace, in wisdom and certainty. If these words can express to the reader what it is now intended to convey to one who successfully performs what has been recommended, then by that very fact he will undoubtedly solve the enigma of time and will enter into the realm of Eternity. He may not be able to express what he then knows, for he will never disclose what Eternity reveals to him about what lies beyond the points *A* and *B*, his births and deaths. But he will *know*. He will realize how simple in reality is the whole problem of existence and nonexistence, so impossible to solve solely by man's thinking principle. He will know that Eternity is the perpetual NOW into

which are incessantly flowing THE INFINITE BEFORE AND THE INEXHAUSTIBLE AFTER.

XXXVI

The Fourth Dimension

The possibility of the existence of dimensions higher than the three in which we spend our physical lives has long been recognized by different kinds of thinkers, and not necessarily those having anything in common with occultism. Some Theosophical writers have located the fourth dimension in the astral plane, the fifth in the mental one, and so on. Apparently they believe in the existence of many higher dimensions, so far unknown and unimaginable to the majority of us. In this chapter I will not go so far, nor beyond all the possible conceptions that we may reasonably build even with our mind. This is because that which is inconceivable is of no use to man. This statement does not include spiritual matters, which are beyond all dimensions and with which our consciousness operates in quite a different way, then say, a philosopher with his fourth dimension.

Many theories have already been proposed, and the names of Gauss, Minkowsky, Einstein, and others are often coupled with them. Some have recognized the fourth dimension as simply the *fourth co-ordinate of time*, added to the three well known and used in mathematics. But, because both the occult and spiritual traditions do not recognize TIME as something real, we cannot accept this point of view here. Time is a possible factor only in some special conditions, highly relative, like the necessity of MOVEMENT, CHANGE, and SPACE. In other words, only in a world similar or identical to that which we pretend to know during our lifetime.

The occult and Theosophical theories are too elusive to be caught by the intellect, with which the mass of humanity operates. So we will abstain from referring to this side of things. But there is another, by

no means new, conception based on mathematics, in the first place on geometrical principles. This I would like to expound as briefly as possible.

A *point* does not possess any dimension. This cannot be contested. But what IS that point? How can we get it in order to define it? Only by introducing elements from something higher, which already *do* possess a dimension. So, we cross two lines and say that the point is just the intersection. We can rightly conceive that every line is a trace of a moving point. This means that something that does not possess any element of dimension in itself, nevertheless can create a conception of something that is higher, because that *already has a dimension*, like our line. This is interesting, as this rule will act in our further analysis.

1. So we have our first one-dimensional thing, which for the purpose of simplicity we will take as a straight line *a*, a definite and measurable element, having ONE DIMENSION, that is, LENGTH.
2. Now, we want to take something from the next dimension, which possesses not only length but also breadth. This can be done mathematically by MOVING the line *a* in a direction *perpendicular* to itself, until it creates a SQUARE. This new thing may be symbolized as *a*. Now what will be the reaction of a one-dimensional being, or a simple line toward the square? As the line has no second dimension, it cannot conceive of the square in the same way as we do. The element of breadth is beyond the understanding of a line, and it will think about the square only as a CROSS SECTION of it with the ideal, flat, one-dimensional world of lines. It is easy to see that for a line, the breadth of the square is something like *infinity* is for us, because actually in the breadth of the square there can be put an infinite number of lines parallel one to another, as they have no thickness. We should note this, as we will need it in our further study.

   Two-dimensional beings may well move on their flat-world surface that is without thickness, but they cannot RAISE themselves above that surface, for then they would be transferred into the next, higher dimension, which is inconceivable to them; just as an average man cannot imagine the FOURTH dimension. If in a crowd of such flat beings we cared to play a joke, we could

simply lift up one of them, and it would appear to the rest as if their colleague had suddenly ceased to exist, having disappeared without any trace. A miracle of course! In such a flat land we could imprison lots of these two-dimensional beings simply by drawing a closed line round them, and they would never be in a position to escape. All three-dimensional bodies would appear to them only as CROSS SECTIONS of those bodies where they intersect their one-surfaced, flat world. P. D. Ouspensky quotes a curious conception in this matter. He asks us to imagine this two-dimensional world as the surface of a lake, on which its inhabitants live and move. Then, if you were to swim in such a lake, our two-dimensional brothers would see you differently in every second of your movements. For they will see only the CROSS SECTIONS of your body where it meets the surface. At certain moments when you are, say, knee-deep in water, they would see only two separated ovals; if you go deeper, only the cross section of your waist, and so on. When you dive or leave the water, you simply disappear in a miraculous way for those beings.

3. In order to create a solid that will have one more dimension, the third, we would proceed similarly as before. Moving the square in a *direction perpendicular to itself*, we produce HEIGHT, which did not exist in the square. This solid will be a CUBE, belonging to the three-dimensional world, such as that in which we believe we live. As we saw from item 2, only CROSS SECTIONS of it would be conceivable to the dwellers of the plane to which corresponds the symbol a^2. The symbol of the three-dimensional solid will of course be a^3, and all its measurements will be derived from three of them, length, breadth, and height.
4. Now comes the climax of our deliberations. We want to proceed similarly again, but this time applying the PERPENDICULAR movement in relation to ALL the surfaces of the three-dimensional solid. Here our power of imagination and ability to create abstruse conceptions are put on trial. An untrained mind would not succeed in solving such an unusual problem. In one of my books dedicated to special training, development, and control of the mind (*Concentration*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1958) I give in Chapter XX the final exercises of that course (Nos. 9 and 9A), which

exactly correspond to the passing into the fourth dimension, or, in other words, to realization of a^4.

This symbol means nothing else than the EXPANSION of the third dimension into the fourth one, if we like the language of mathematics. The application of the position of a two-dimensional entity in relation to a three-dimensional one now comes into play. We are now just in a corresponding position, when considering the fourth dimension. I cannot speak here about the true realization of it, as that lies beyond the powers of the mind, accustomed as it is to operate only in three dimensions.

In *Concentration* (Chapter XX) I did not mention the present conception (mathematical) of the higher state of consciousness, operating in a superior world, for the purpose of the exercises as given there was quite different. But we may borrow the idea of that chapter: there IS a path for the realization of *That*, which is impossible to achieve without special training, as the student can experience for himself.

Now it remains only to trace the mental lines of thinking parallel to those of items 2 and 3 of this chapter. So to conclude we may say, using the method of analogy:

i Our three-dimensional forms of this world might be only CROSS SECTIONS of the REAL THINGS belonging to the fourth dimension.

ii Phenomena otherwise inexplicable concerning the transmutation of matter, such as the miraculous cures and apparitions of Christ among His faithful after His physical death (in the three-dimensional world, of course), which passed through all physical obstacles; some occult phenomena known to a few advanced adepts, such as objects that allegedly appear from nowhere; cognition of things belonging to the subdivision of time, usually unknown to us, which we call the future. All these could be ascribed to the properties of the higher plane of existence, *providing we accept what has been stated in i*).

iii The so-called defiance of the law of gravitation (see Part 5, Chapter "Levitation"), that is the walking over the surface of the sea as in the Gospels, or over burning coals (as recently performed by some fakirs in England) without damage to the performer's body,

and so on, may be only reflections of the so far unknown laws of the higher dimensions, accessible to those whose consciousness is able to function in them.

I am not trying to give the points in ii and iii as axioms. You may accept them only as guesses, based on the nonacceptance of the term supernatural. For that which is incomprehensible from the lower point of view (in this case of our three-dimensional world and mind), may be quite natural in the realm to which the majority of men have not yet any access.

The main geometrical conception of the higher dimension, an outline of which has been given in this chapter, is neither new nor unique. There are many similar theories. Here I chose an application that seems to be less difficult and does not anticipate the delving into very complicated equations, or fantastic inventions like the once-famous "Formula of God" given to us by the strange genius of the forgotten philosopher and mathematician, Hoené-Wronski of Paris.

One thing seems to be true: the deepest consciousness in man, which transcends the narrow limits of conditioned existence as we know it, might be hiding its powers, which some day will manifest themselves, disclosing new horizons of being and bringing new light to the sons of earth.

PART FIVE

Chapters XXXVII-XLVII

Dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Gérard Encausse (Papus)

XXXVII

Religions

To-day we often hear about religious propagandists who travel from one country to another in order to make converts for their own aims; but half a century ago, only Christian missions journeyed into the world to so-called pagan countries. Apart from their efforts to convert the natives, the missionaries founded schools and hospitals and brought some material help to people living in substandard conditions, especially in Africa and Asia.

When such work was performed among primitive people who did not have their own culture, or any true religious or philosophical background, it proved to be useful and successful.

From that time, Eastern people entered into closer contact with Europeans and some of their philosophy became accessible to the latter. In the beginning of this century, some representatives of Indian Yoga went to the West and founded their own schools. Among others may be mentioned Vivekananda, Yogananda, and Krishnamurti. And now there are no major capital cities in the West (Europe and America) where you could fail to find a Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, or other organization, having members among natives of those cities. Sometimes we read in the press that exponents of these Eastern religions are visiting our countries bringing their messages for the benefit of their audiences.

Now, what may be the attitude of a follower of the philosophy expounded by the Maharshi?

We will try to analyze some aspects of the question. The world's great religions are based on the teachings of the inspired spiritual Masters, who came to give us some hints about spiritual life and the eternal aims of man. Religions are intended for average people, giving practical instructions on broad lines, which can be followed even in one's everyday life.

All religions teach us to do good and avoid evil, having perfection in a far-sighted perspective. So, if any religion gives you what you need, apart from your bodily aims, where is the reason to change it? Apparent differences between religions are only superficial. If you are unable to follow one of them because it cannot bring you a brighter outlook on life and the world, be sure that any change and acceptance of a different creed will not help you at all. It would be only your curiosity that dictates such a change. Anyway, we know that there were and are wise men, of truly eminent character and morality, who did not and do not participate in any religion whatsoever. They believe that one cannot bribe the Almighty by the mere fact of belonging to one or another religion, considered as "particularly pleasing to God."

They simply grow beyond and above these childish conceptions. But those who cannot keep step with such spiritual giants should be satisfied with their own position, and seek in their religions the solace and peace that can surely be found in them. We can find saints and initiates in every one of them. There are still other considerations in this matter, and in the chapter "Egregors" of this book the interested reader can find further explanations about belonging to different religious bodies.

As we can conclude from the foregoing, changes of religion are usually meaningless and without any profit for the person concerned.

Therefore I do not believe too much in all the "missions" directed to people *who already possess* their own religious philosophy expounded by one or another of the Great Initiates, or Teachers of humanity. I cannot see any gain for an intelligent Christian who knows much about his divine Master Jesus to be "converted" to Hinduism or Buddhism. Likewise, for an Indian who knows his wonderful Rishis such as Krishna, Sankaracharya, or Maharshi—together with the deepest transcendental philosophy of Vedanta—to be "converted" to another Master, who is deified by the West.

According to the words of Maharshi, "No Sage ever contradicts an-

other." Great Teachers do not possess our human weaknesses: they are surely not eager to collect more adherents than another Sage, nor are they jealous of one another. It is only our own human imperfection that suggests such stupidities to us. We measure the Great Beings, who are fully conscious of their union with the Whole-Absolute, after our own pitiable egoistic standards, based on deep ignorance and blind belief in a separate existence, and not in the unity of Life.

After all, the very fact that we are born into certain conditions and religious systems, and not into others, explains itself.

Now, if we are able to transcend the limits of religion, and merge in formless Truth, seeking for our true Self, then denominations will cease to attract us. For they are below our supreme ideal, the conception of the Absolute, omnipresent Universal Being enclosing in it everything, nameless and formless. In this case the change of the outer shell that has lost all meaning for us is only a superficial and useless activity, which lacks any logical foundation.

If we are advanced enough to recognize that the source of Life is and can be only ONE, we will see that all light comes only from the same unique Source; therefore, all Great Teachers are exponents or representatives of the same unique Reality-Absolute. Where then is any reason for the change of the outer religious form? Through every window comes the same Light, from the same Sun.

There is only one true "conversion," and it is from unreal to Real; from transient to perennial; from death to the eternal Life.

This conversion is synonymous with:

1. Finding the Master.
2. The entering on the Path of spiritual progress.
3. Seeing the first rays of the Overself, our true Self.

Everything else is only imaginative erring on the dark path of ignorance.

If you know *who you are*, by that very fact you know everything worthy to be known. *If you do not*, no outer knowledge will ever enlighten the dark path. *In vain* to seek after limited knowledge in order to reach the Infinite.

That is why those few, great Saints and Sages, who know the mystery of the Universal Being, which we call God, are melted in the fire of love for Him, dissolved forever in the Center of Life. What meaning for

them have denominations and forms, under which their younger brothers, men, try to adore and worship the Whole?

Of course, as far as man believes in his person as a separate being, God must also necessarily be a person, for man is simply unable to conceive of anything else. And this is the field of activity of every religion. Far better to try to understand that in which you are born than to worry about finding something "higher or better," as we like to say. Religion is for you, and not you for religion. If you are evil and persist in it, no religion will give you so-called salvation. And if you are good, no hell will be able to swallow you, even if you do not belong to any organization.

Men often commit just this error; they like to change the outer forms, but not themselves, forgetting that the shell is only a home for the snail, and has no meaning when the dweller is gone.

We can measure the attainment of men by their greater or lesser attachment to the outer form.

Intolerance, fanaticism, persistence in peculiar limited beliefs, and the passion to impose them on their surroundings, are signs by which we can place men on certain levels of evolution. But this placing does not mean any damnation. It can only help us to forgive our neighbors their offenses. For we know that these are born from the common source of every evil, the basic ignorance, which does not allow men to see everything in its true light.

XXXVIII

The Knowledge of Prototypes

True Life is life unconditioned. To seek our own true life means to seek That which is unchangeable, unlimited, the very root of existence. It implies such extension of consciousness that one having reached it transcends what we call man and becomes something else, the Universal Reality, being one with ALL.

Some call this state divine or superhuman and they are by no means wrong, but before we reach this peak we must pass through many intermediary stages, all belonging to the human realm.

Therefore, it is well to know some of the basic laws governing the realm of human manifestation, for this light of understanding is the dim dawn before the sun of the Self floods the consciousness.

Such is the knowledge of prototypes or images. Everything that happens has its counterpart on the higher nonphysical plane of existence. Everything and every event has its image in this subtle ether, invisible to ordinary eyes. In the Eastern tradition it was called *Akasha*. The West sometimes called it images, or prototypes.

The conception is somewhat like the negative of a film, that which exists potentially but is not yet fully developed. The French word *cliché* comes near to it, but the best English word is perhaps image.

The fact of the existence of these images is attested to by clairvoyance, that is, the ability to "see" into the past, the hidden present, and the so-called future.

If a man's consciousness is able to function on the subtle plane of these images, he can "see" the aforementioned subdivisions of time. Some occult schools try to reach these finer realms of matter, believing that the next step must lead to immaterial Spirit.

Those who can speak with authority tell us to seek first the unchangeable eternal Spirit or Universal Self (Overself), for with knowledge of this Reality there will come of itself the ability to see the finer realms of matter. One who has known Reality has no more desire to see the shadows. They are in relativity and therefore finite and impermanent. They imply the existence of subject and object and the seeker of Reality rejects them as veils that hinder his search.

Such seekers are not common and it is well for others still bound by relative existence to know these laws.

The plane of prototypes contains in it every manifestation of life, from the formation of a planet to the most abstract ideas of the mind. What we think, project, and realize depends upon contact with one or another prototype. This is perfectly clear to one who has reached the point of understanding the origin and nature of the thinking process, and who knows how to control his thoughts. He can choose from the approaching images what thoughts he will admit. Such admission means a fresh opportunity of active life for that thought and the process is

then similar to that of a seed that holds within it the possibility of growth, and with suitable conditions may give birth to a new form of life. We have to remember that all nature has the inherent desire to manifest its life.

This is the law that rules the universe in its material form. For everything, no matter how subtle, is one or another kind of matter, though all is not manifest to our senses, and all is the projection of pure Consciousness.

In effect, man has the power to make a selection of the ideas coming to him and this knowledge is of great value to him. However, to abide in pure Consciousness is the only truth, unveiled and unconditioned. It is Wisdom.

The knowledge of Truth also brings the ability to read thought-images. If you make the choice as mentioned above—that of union with Ultimate Truth—it is because you see that which you choose.

It was discovered that the approach of an idea has three phases: the first when the idea (image) comes for the first time. If at this stage a man accepts it, then begins its realization carried out by his own being. If he rejects it, the idea goes away but later comes again once more. But now the process of absorption is more difficult for the man. If he rejects it for the second time, the image recedes and later returns for the last time. The difficulties are now much greater, but the connection has not yet been definitely severed. Repudiation for the third time is final and irrevocable.

All inventions of the human mind have as their base a prototype or idea. We cannot create anything from nothing. Our limited reception apparatus on the three planes—physical, astral, and mental—is similar to a radio receiver. The rate of our own wavelength determines the kind of ideas that come to us. This is the secret of all the great inventions and discoveries in human history. A sensitive mind is a good receiver. The tuning-in is the preparation and conditioning of the human being.

Louis Pasteur made his discoveries in the realm of bacteriology because he was tuned to that direction of investigation. It is doubtful if he was as competent in music or mechanics, for example.

Many artists tell us that before they conceive a masterpiece, the idea of it comes to them and their only task is to give the idea material

form. Poets also do not know from what source comes the inspiration of a brilliant poem.

If we make an analysis of our own consciousness, we will realize the truth of this knowledge of prototypes. All this refers to the world manifested in space and time and has no reality in Spirit or Self. Before reaching this sublime realm, we have to pass through the world of relativity (called *Maya* by Hindus), which manifests on the three basic planes.

A contemporary occultist and mystic, Paul Sédir, said that his Master once gave him a real example of the working of the law of prototypes. He said that even the form of a modern automobile would be impossible to conceive unless on the earth there were some strange animals (as yet unknown to official science), with big eyes covered with a transparent shell similar to the lines of a motor car's headlamp reflectors. He compared them to Coleoptera.

Now we can realize that there must also be prototypes of future events that are still not actual.

Men who consciously (which is rare) play a role in human history, such as in revolutions, reforms, wars, and so on, really do no more than materialize an imminent prototype. Such is the destiny of those active in the wider circles of life, and to them also comes the triple presentation of the idea (image) of which we spoke. But they are free to accept or reject. That is what Christ meant when He told His Disciples: "It is impossible that scandals should not come (for it is the world's *karma*): but woe to him through whom they come."

A thoughtful person can find in his daily life many things that can be perfectly explained by the knowledge of prototypes.

The future course of events follows according to the laws governing growth, and the reader can then anticipate for himself what will happen.

Incidentally, Paul Sédir said that a Master can create some prototypes. Then there arises the questions, "Who created all the prototypes in the universe? And why?"

Do you know why you love one person and not another? You would know if you could penetrate into the consciousness of each one and see him as he really is, but this is impossible for the average man who judges all from outer appearances. So, in order to answer the second question, one must enter the consciousness of the Infinite.

If you can do this here and now, you will have the answer.

When you are able to do this, you will find that you have no questions to ask, for questioner and questioned will be One. Subject and object will be dissolved.

There will be but One forever.

XXXIX

Egregors

Most occult theories do not help in the quest of Self-knowledge, but some of them may have certain practical use in understanding the world of relativity, insofar as one is compelled to live in it.

One such is that of egregors or collective beings. These entities play an important role in the material life of humanity and the individual fate of men. Knowledge of them may throw light on some of the events of world history. Their existence is as real as that of an average man, limited to the three planes, physical, emotional (astral), and mental. Egregors have the same construction.

There are two kinds of collective entities. One kind arise and die independently of the human will. They may be called natural egregors such as all nations possess, and also different religions and organizations in their outer forms.

Human beings united in a nation are like the cells of a body, and form the egregor of the nation. The *emotional counterpart of the egregor is the sum total of all the emotions (astral lives) of the individuals, and the collective mind is the sum total of the thoughts of that nation.* We know that every nation has its own prevailing character, though there may be some without very definite characteristics. The average Frenchman differs considerably from the average Englishman, not only physically but emotionally and mentally also. There are, too, hidden peculiarities of temperament and manners that dis-

tinguish the different nations. In the same way, their egregors are different.

Of course, their lives transcend that of individual men, just as man's life transcends the life of each individual cell. As one dies, others are produced to replace it. Nevertheless, egregors are not eternal. That of the once powerful Roman Empire has ceased to exist. Egregors can be born, flourish, decline, and die. They can also fight, even kill each other; for example, Rome, which after hundreds of years of bitter fighting killed the Carthaginian Empire. Similarly as with men, they can be wounded not only on the physical plane but on the astral and mental also and not always does physical strength decide their fate. The Roman Empire was infinitely stronger and possessed more material means than any other then civilized nation or group. It fought, with all its resources, the newborn egregor of Christianity, killing and pitilessly torturing the new sect as the Christians were called. But the egregor of Christianity had immense superiority on the other planes. The ideals and feelings of the early Christians were full of life and vigor and the aging Roman world had nothing to match them. This is only one of numerous examples that could be found. Different sects, political parties, occult societies, states, even armies, and so on, all of them have their souls or collective beings, and their visible material counterparts are the same as those of a man, who exists on the three planes.

Destruction of the physical body of the egregor does not always mean its death, *providing the astral and mental part (soul) remains healthy*. This means that if the ideals and aims of the egregor have not been destroyed, the physical will reincarnate in due time, and a new organization, sect, party, or the like will appear again in material form, though its new name may be different. *Its most deadly enemy is that which can prove that its ideas and aims are obsolete and false.* This is the "soul" of the egregor and its life is dependent on this remaining intact. If this part is affected, it loses its capacity to attract new cells or human minds and hearts to it and eventually fades away, following the fate of its soul.

Thus a *purely physical attack on any egregor may fail*, as did the Roman attack on the early Christians, and from this may be surmised, by a keen observer, the fate of many of the contemporary egregors.

If we wish to delve more deeply into these investigations we will find the law of triple existence in operation everywhere. The occultists of Western tradition speak of egregors of planets (also called their spirits), realms of nature, and so on. All astrology is based on just that knowledge.

Similarly, as well as so-called *natural egregors* whose existence is apparently independent of the human will, there are numerous *artificial ones*. Wherever a number of units are joined for a common purpose, a new egregor is born. These entities can be long- or short-lived, depending on the forces brought into play. Lack of sufficient power in one of the three components means weakness and vulnerability from that side. A theory such as this explains in a reasonable way the activities of societies, organizations, sects, and political parties for which it would otherwise be difficult to account. The accepted mystical concept of the microcosm and the macrocosm finds its full explanation in the light of the knowledge of collective beings, egregors. "As above, so below."

Often the great egregors create their own symbols, as for example the Indian Lingam, the Cross of Christianity, the Swastika, and the Hammer and Sickle. The Lion of Britain, the Cock of France, and so on, are also here.

Unconsciously, almost every human being belongs to one or more of these collective entities. Only on the highest plane, when man surmounts the realm of relativity and becomes forever merged in Reality (the true Self)—becoming independent of the three forms of temporal existence—is he free from all allegiance in time and space. Only then is he free from all spirit of separateness, all fanaticism and intolerance. For him there are no more egregors, which then become as if nonexistent for him, just as is water in a mirage.

There is one philosphical system that aims at such unconditional freedom, pointing directly to the ultimate goal. In that system, the ideal of the Realization of the Ultimate Truth, in other words, knowledge of the true I or Self in man, has been developed to its end, without any veil of symbols. It is the wisdom of Advaita. In India, Advaita has always had an uninterrupted chain of spiritual Masters who attained the Realm of Truth. They are above and beyond all particular creeds for the reason that every religion or sect based on formal beliefs has a

limited field of action and therefore remains in the realm of relativity. The very fact of the multiplicity of creeds and sects is proof that not one of them possesses the whole of Truth. The Truth cannot fight itself, otherwise it would be untruth.

From the angle of the average man, religions have reason for existence. They are necessary at the period of their activity and as long as men prefer to live in relativity, the wisdom of life, which is the basis of religion, alone can speak to them.

How many of us can live in the rarefied atmosphere of Mount Everest? Men are more acclimatized to the valleys at its foot. Nevertheless, there are those who attempt the peaks, regardless of the dangers and discomforts.

They know that beyond the realm of egregors there exists a kingdom of absolute freedom and bliss, and they know that they will eventually find it, for it is written: ". . . Seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you."

XL

Occult Experiences

The triple constitution of man, that is, his physical, emotional (astral), and intellectual (mental) counterparts, is a relative reality insofar as one considers oneself as functioning only on those three realms of consciousness. This theory can be tested by one's own personal experience. But it is not easy, and for many even quite impossible: an above average will power is the deciding factor. In some exceptionally rare cases it can be innate in an individual; but usually it must be developed by a continuous, conscious, and considerable effort. I only wish to say here that occult supermen are self-made rather than born.

In everyday life all the three above-quoted elements are hard to distinguish and to separate in the average man. Of course, an analysis

could be made intellectually, on the ground of logical conclusion. It is easy to discriminate between the three kinds of energy acting in us: they correspond to the three planes recognized by occultists.

But theoretical conception and practical experience are almost opposite poles.

There are a few direct indications, mostly from the side of Western occultists (especially those of the Hermetic schools) leading to practices and exercises that make it possible for the student to experience things for himself. About thirty years ago it was still possible to find some of the rare books and old pamphlets that spoke about the techniques for the transference of consciousness into the less dense human bodies (astral and mental counterparts), that is, extenorization of the astrosome.

Nowadays these sources seem to be too hard to approach. Perhaps it is better so: the dangers are too acute and the chances of a happy ending in such an occult endeavor are too low for men who are able to develop sufficient will power and to acquire the necessary information concerning the techniques, but who are not endowed with the higher, spiritual abilities and insight. It follows that the full techniques cannot be given for publication.

Therefore without exposing what I consider as unsuitable, I will describe my own experiences in that realm.

Many years ago, when I was in the midst of my occult studies, I read a theosophical book in which there was a description of the famous mystical ceremony of Vesak in the Himalayas, at which many Masters and their disciples were presumed to appear in their astral bodies, apart from those who could find the secret ways to reach it in their physical forms.

Long before I had been working with the theoretical part of the Hermetic *Astral Initiation*, trying to build a firm foundation for my next practical experiences. Anyway, I decided now to accelerate my work because the Vesak, falling that year on May 25, left me only about three months for training.

As the preliminaries included many of the Hatha-Yoga breathing exercises, with which I was well acquainted, the effort was not beyond my reach. Of course, there is no room here nor reason to give any details of the main techniques, as they are connected with danger, and I do not wish to take any responsibility if my readers try to per-

form the same—especially now, because I cannot see any real benefit in all these things, apart from curiosity.

Generally speaking, the purpose was to achieve a conscious exteriorization of the astral body and to travel in it to the mysterious spot in the Himalayas where the Vesak was supposed to take place. For the purpose the propitious astrological hours had to be used. I calculated them in advance and found that from 8 P.M. to midnight the final preparations had to be concluded.

At the time, I was living in a secluded attic over the first floor of a quiet little house. The entrance door to my room was close to the empty garret, through which passed the chimneys from the ground-level flats.

So I closed all doors and windows and lay down on my divan. Special intensive *pranayamas* had to be performed for one hour, with concentration focused on the centers that are the points of connection with the astral double (body). One has to feel these centers one after another, probing to separate them into two parts: one purely physical, and the other belonging to the astral counterpart. The room was full of incense-smoke, consisting of special herbs and sandalwood powder. Instead of the electric light, mallow and violet lamps filled with pure vegetable oil, perfumed with cinnamon, shed their light on the darkened room. The sequence of activities that had to be performed in order to get the exteriorization, although well memorized during the long weeks of preparation, were written on a sheet of cardboard and pinned to the wall close to my head.

When breathing reached the very slow tempo prescribed and the dynamic mental picture of gradual perception by feeling of the *chakras* (hidden astral centers) became clear, the final effort was made. The consciousness left the brain and a strange state of existence, apart from the recumbent physical form, gradually developed. It seemed that the astral counterpart was separating itself from the upper part of the body: first the head, then the thorax, waist, and so on, until the last link at the feet was severed.

I was as if in space in the middle of the room, with slightly dimmed awareness, but clearly remembering all that I had to perform according to the elaborately prepared plan.

My first glance was directed to the place where my body should have been lying. It was there: immobile and pale like a corpse, with-

out any visible trace of breathing, but evidently alive. And then came the first difficulty: a powerful desire to enter back into it penetrated my awareness. I had known about this before hand, as well as the fact that if I yielded, the whole tedious work of preparation would be wasted.

By a continuous effort of will I held myself apart from my body. The first problem was to prove to myself that I was not dreaming and was in full control of events. My ability to think was by no means affected or obliterated and memory worked as usual. According to instructions I began to look around me. The familiar surroundings in the room were apparently unchanged, though objects appeared to be a little misty, not as clear-cut as in the waking state. It seemed to me that they had a kind of faint aura around them. I began to move, as if walking from one end of the room to the other; this was not performed by movement of my legs, but simply as a result of my desire to be in one place or another. I went to the mirror in order to test myself further. If I can see something in the glass, I thought, then the whole thing is only a dream or imagination. But in the dark frame there was only emptiness. That which constituted me at the moment gave no reflection in the astral counterpart of the physical mirror. Moreover, I could see nothing apart from the shadowy forms of the objects round me. I myself was as invisible as air. But the form on the divan was still lying in its cataleptic immobility and pulled me to it, as if by a strong cord.

I realized that the only motive forces in this strange world were my will and power of imagination controlling my desire to be here or there, to move or to remain still.

Just for a moment I allowed the invisible, elastic thread to pull me close to the resting body, and then by a sharp effort of will to fly again to the door leading out of my room. The awareness that I could pass through every physical obstacle prevented me from seeking the doorknob. In a moment I was under the roof and flowing between the chimneys and poles which supported the structure.

There was no sound in this silent world, or rather, in that part of it in which, during this time, I was able to function consciously.

Then came a moment of intense happiness: I realized that I was free from all limitations of the form abandoned there on the divan, be-

tween the burning colored lamps that emitted their subtle perfume of cinnamon, mixed with the smoke of the incense-sticks.

"So the operation of exteriorization has been successfully performed" I told myself mentally. "I can fly where I wish, no matter what happens to my body. I am not dreaming! I am fully aware of everything! Where have I to go? Oh, of course, to the Himalayas, to that lonely, mysterious spot where white-clad figures are forming magic triangles, circles, and other mystical patterns before the enormous altar amongst the rocks, surrounded by the seven colors of the Lord Buddha's aura."

A new effort of will drew me outside the house. I saw the dark-blue sky and the moon high in it, spreading its cold silvery rays over the world; but everything was dimmed, not as clear as in the physical world.

But this was evidently the limit of my powers at that time. An insurmountable fear of losing contact with the living form so far below in the half-dark room with its pentacles hanging on the walls suddenly penetrated my whole being. I felt that I could not go any farther, for the icy cold of death seemed to be growing in me with every second. I was not yet prepared to finish my experience by leaving the earthly life in such a way. I wanted to live. And then the pulling on the invisible cord linking me with my physical shell grew painfully intense. I could not actually see the famous silver thread between the solar plexus of the body and my astrosome, if I may use this expression. Thoughts began to enter one after another into my mind, violently ruining my concentration and dimming perception.

Soon I was again in my room, close to the immobilized form and evidently rapidly losing control over my astral counterpart. In the last moment I saw the rosy dawn through the eastern window, and realized that it was too late for any further travels. If there really was a Vesak it must all be over by now. Then came a moment of unconsciousness, until I found myself lying in the flesh on the divan as before.

Gradually the stiffness began to leave my limbs; breathing became almost normal and circulation returned to its usual speed. Soon I was able to raise my head and look at the clock: half past three, an early spring day was on the way. I extinguished the lamps, threw out the ends of the long incense-sticks, and opened the windows. The fresh cold air seemed to intoxicate me.

And then irresistible sleepiness overcame me, even before I could change my white ritual dress for my usual night attire. I fell asleep on the divan without any dreams, only awakening in the late afternoon.

Later I repeated the experience but for the last time, because my interest in this kind of practice seemed to disappear of itself. No solution to deeper questions lay in the exteriorization of the astral body. Its life was not what I sought, and no important problem could be solved by it. There was no doubt for me about the existence of much higher things than the mere wandering through the antechambers of another world that is still not free from limitations and the specter of death. Moreover, it was all something artificial, subject to too much toil and too many meticulous preparations, and not providing any true illumination.

The exteriorization of the astrosome as described in this chapter does not give a picture of the final abandonment of the physical body at death, for then quite different conditions prevail. Then the body does not lie in a cataleptic state that is still a living one, because death severs all man's connection with the physical world, and the visions that may appear during exteriorization cannot occur in it. These facts should always be remembered.

Above all else I realized that all astral experiences are utterly subjective, dependent upon a man's mentality and preconceived theories and beliefs. From the efforts of my friends, who at that time were also trying similar experiments, as well as from occult literature, I saw that no two persons have the same experiences in the astral realm, and no definite rules can be deduced from the results. Everyone sees various things and passes through an infinite variety of conditions in the astral world. Even my second experience was different from the first, which has already been described. Without delving into unnecessary particulars, I can only state shortly that I realized the overwhelming power of one's mental attitude, which decides on the kinds of visions. The colored current of emotions that I saw seemed to be in accordance with that which I already knew theoretically; strange human faces and figures and nonhuman entities could be perceived, but only insofar as my attention was directed to them. And I came to the final conviction that behind all of these things *there was a subconscious creative power in myself* that seemed to be responsible for all the apparitions. They came

as if on a cinema film and passed away to give place to others. But the operator was always within myself. When I saw a beautiful form its appearance could be prolonged by an effort of my will, while the hideous and aggressive mirages were intensified when I directed the fullness of my attention to them. They invariably faded away when I began to doubt in their reality, or simply concentrated my mind on some exorcisms or mystical symbols, learned during the long years of my previous occult studies. So I could test and recognize the striking statements of some occult Masters such as Eliphas Levi, De Guaita, and Sédir that, in most cases, the apparitions are only kinds of vampires, using man's vital forces (no matter whether these be physical, astral, or mental) in order to be manifested in one's presence.

When Odysseus wanted to see the dwellers of the realm of the dead, or conjure the spirits of the world of eternal shadow, he had to use animals especially slaughtered for the purpose, so that the phantoms could use the vital energy of the vapors rising from the still warm blood streaming from the offerings. Some types of magic still prescribe the same methods; but in modern occultism these primitive and repulsive practices are fast disappearing, leaving room for more scientific but nonetheless inconclusive approaches, one of which I have tried to describe in this chapter.

XLI

Levitation

In the occult tradition as well as in the chronicles of the lives of some great Christian Saints, it is known that under certain peculiar circumstances their bodies have been lifted up into the air and remained suspended for some time.

This usually happened to the Saints in their cells when they were merged in deep and ardent prayer, in most cases before a holy image or crucifix.

With Western occultists similar facts called levitation have been ascribed to the exceptional strength of their meditations, and at times to a definite effort to produce the phenomenon. Eastern Yogis are credited with like performances. It is not my present purpose to enumerate the particular cases, but only to investigate and test the possibility of such defiance of the law of gravity by the inner processes in the human consciousness, as it can throw much light on the powers hidden within us.

Many years ago, in a circle of Hermetic study, we decided to perform such an analysis by means of our own experience. As usual in every occult organization worthy of the name, there were some members who were more advanced than others. So we arranged that the experiment would be tried by those who had developed more will power and steadiness.

A large set of scales with decimal weights was installed in our meeting-room. The member undergoing the test was placed on the platform of the scales in a comfortable chair, used for meditation. Weights were then added exactly to counterbalance the other side.

The experimenter was instructed to merge into deep concentration, thereby producing loss of body feeling and also of waking consciousness. While the other members, acting as observers, sat round the scales in a wide circle, in the dim light of the special oil-fed lamps, the experimenting person performed many breathing exercises in the form of prolonged *pranayamas*.

When after about half an hour a peculiar paleness of the face and almost imperceptible movements of the chest showed that the breath had slowed to a few respirations per minute, the platform with the seated body moved upward slightly. We watched this development intently. Gradually the diminishing weight of the experimenter became so noticeable that the counterbalancing side had to be lightened. In that first experiment it was only a few ounces in the beginning, later amounting to a pound, followed by two and more in the next sessions. Some members were failures, evidently because of lack of the necessary power of concentration. Usually after the peak of levitation had been reached and the maximum amount of weights had been removed, the seated body slowly began to recover its normal weight as the man returned from his trance.

However, the fact was proved. The physical laws showed themselves

to be dependent upon nonphysical, immaterial factors, and this was just what we were seeking.

There were no cases of full levitation, resulting in the body floating freely in air. Evidently the power of the experimenters was insufficient for this. But the possibility had been tested and proved beyond all doubt.

Actually, this experiment was only an extension of a well-known one sometimes used by spiritualists when working with different mediums. The person acting as the medium is similarly placed on the platform of a set of scales. Then, when the manifestation of spirits appears in full (such as movements of solid objects in the room, touching by invisible hands, wax-prints of same, direct speech and the appearance of figures and so on in the circle), dozens of pounds have to be removed from the scales in order to counter the loss of weight in the medium.

But this can be explained comparatively easily. The vital fluid substance (etheric double, also called ectoplasm) borrowed by the apparitions in order to permit them to become visible and tangible, is *still matter* and possesses the qualities inherent in matter, including weight. There is no breaking of any physical laws.

But independent of all mediums and spiritualistic tricks, *levitation* as has just been described seems to be the result of quite different laws, superior to physical ones.

If we realize the fact *that consciousness*, immaterial as it is, *has power over the various states of matter*, then all the miracles performed by those Great Ones who sometimes appear in human history may become understandable even to our outer mind. It is simple: if two times two makes four, the same arithmetic law tells us that two billion times two results in four billion. The crux of the matter lies only in the quantitative value of the numbers, and for our investigation of the amount of power brought into play. The reader himself can now call to mind the example of Lourdes and other similar cases of immaterial powers acting on the lower plane of existence.

Moreover, there are no obstacles to prevent an adequately prepared occultist from trying to repeat the experience that I had in the past.

A German occultist known as Bo-Yin-Ra (who was actually a Bavarian painter) mentioned in his works that a perfectly developed spiritual Master may leave no trace of a body after his death: it will be dis-

solved, by his spirit's will, into the elements from which it was created. Elsewhere his disciple Gustav Meyrink affirmed that when after death the graves of some advanced occultists have been opened, instead of the corpse only a peculiar sword has been found formed from the one piece of iron, but with the blade made of metal while the hilt remained as the red ore. I am quoting this not as a fact that has to be accepted, but only as a proof that the idea of domination by the immaterial primordial Power (Consciousness) over matter is not a new one.

This Power cannot be anything other than infinite, eternal, and immutable Consciousness, the primary cause of everything, the "beginning and the end," the "Alpha and Omega" of St. John.

The Great Spirit of North American Red Indians, the God of Christians, the *Atman* of Vedanta, the Supreme Self of Maharshi, and so on, are all synonymous for those whose own consciousness expands beyond the limits of matter.

XLII

Magic

The title of this chapter is a much used but a very misused term. Persons who consider themselves as intellectuals usually deny magic any real existence and summarily put it into the realm of gross superstition. This is because so many irresponsible tales and tricks are connected with the definition of magic.

The truth, as usually, lies between the two extremes, that is, on the one hand an indiscriminative belief and on the other in similar summary criticism. Let us analyze the subject from an impartial point of view, for occultism does not deny the existence of magic.

The best-known definition tells us that, on broad lines, it is *knowledge that permits the achievement of aims belonging to the lower or more material plane of existence, by means that belong to the higher (that is, less material) one.* In practice it usually leads to certain actions on the astral or mental planes, that is, in the realm of emotions

and thoughts, which later have their results in the physical world. This means that, for example, hypnotism, mesmerism, magnetism, and so on, are elements of magic. When a superstitious old woman in a secluded French village still tries to spoil the milk of her hated neighbor by repeating—with malicious intent—the Lord's Prayer in reverse, it is a kind of primitive sorcery (or so-called "black magic").

When we intensely deliberate and send thoughts full of hatred or vengeance to our presumed enemy, we are committing the same deed, although unconscious of the evil magical activity we are then performing. The harboring of thoughts of pure love, good wishes, sympathy, and so on is a brighter sort of magic. To this aspect belongs what we call curses and blessings.

Without delving too deep into tales belonging to the past, I will try to elucidate the present position of magic in this our own epoch.

We know of two kinds of magic, popularly called white and black. The first is presumed to be good, while the second is invariably evil. But these definitions are not scientific. Broader ones would be more appropriate.

The quality of an action is determined by its aim. If it is directed by egoistic, selfish intentions, we then have the negative or "black" type of magic. If things are opposite, that is, when we try to act unselfishly, without any profit for ourselves that could embarrass others, then occultists would define such practices as white or good.

Here an important warning should be given: from the spiritual point of view every sort of nonphysical interference with physical aims is undesirable and therefore illicit. This does not concern the great souls whom we call spiritual Masters or Messengers of God, who have been known in human history as miracle-workers. This is because they did not operate with any occult means but, being in perfect oneness with the Absolute (in other words, with God, *Atman*, Supreme Self, *Ain-Soph*), they have power *not only over the results* but also *over the causes* of each manifestation, on every plane of existence. They do not act in and are not bound by time; eternity is their realm. From our lower point of view we can see their actions only through the prism of time and its subdivisions, the past, present, and future (see chapter: "Eternity"). As one of these Teachers, Sri Ramana Maharshi expressed so beautifully: "The Master has flung his whole personality into the sea of God, and drowned and forgotten it there, till he becomes only

the instrument of God, and when his mouth opens it speaks God's words without effort or forethought; and when he raises a hand, God flows again through that, to work a miracle. . . . Jesus, the man, was utterly unconscious (that is, of being a separate finite personality) when he worked his miracles and spoke his wonderful words. It was White (indivisible) Light, the Life, which is the cause and effect, acting in perfect concert. 'MY FATHER AND I ARE ONE.'"

Returning to magic, we shall now see that even so-called well-intentioned interference in the occult way in the lives of our neighbors is illegal. If you believe that you love a person and want to attract that person's affections by means of magic, you are committing a black magician's trick, and not any white magic. You may multiply the examples for yourself, on the grounds of what has already been said. But *prayer* directed to the Highest does not fall under the category of magic, because here you do not ACT yourself, but abandon everything to the Lord (see Chapter IV of *Concentration* by the same author). Of course, I do not mean the perverted kinds of "prayer" sometimes, unfortunately, used by poorly developed individuals who try to beg God to punish their enemies or to harm those who are unfriendly to such fools.

I am speaking here about well-intentioned prayers. For all others only bring disaster to those who practice them.

Nevertheless, as a consequence of what has already been stated, the conception of the so-called good or white magic is not a well-grounded one, because, if a man tries directly to influence his neighbor (not by prayer) even with the best of intentions, he is still directed by his personal wishes or egoism and there is no perfection in his act. It remains as black magic, and it may be useful to explain here some of its practices as well as the defenses against them.

A person operating in order to inflict some harm on his enemy or any other hostile man would have various possibilities for doing it, providing he possesses an adequate knowledge of the necessary techniques. The first action would be *to make a contact with the body of the prospective victim.* This can be done in many ways. I will indicate only the most common ones, as details would require a separate book if the matter were to be exhausted.

The simplest sources of magnetism for a primitive black magician

would be hair, a piece of fingernail, tooth, or perhaps some clothes that have been worn for a fairly long time. An old tradition says that blood is the most effective intermediary factor, but it is usually much harder to get.

Anyway, when some material contact reaches the hands of the operator, the next step is to attach to it a strong enough dose of poisoned magnetism, or in other words a decaying vital force (negative *prana*) specially developed for the purpose. Of course, you cannot expect me to tell the full know-how of the subsequent proceedings that follow in such abominable practices.

If, as a result of the magician's efforts, the poisoned arrow has been able to reach and attach itself to the victim, he may develop a strange and usually hard-to-cure sickness, which sometimes proves to be deadly. If the magician prefers and knows how, another kind of attack may be performed in a different way. I am referring to the modern method of using a photograph of the subject. Some use it, but often add other forms of contact, like those already described. Then the picture may be provided with hair or other accessories belonging to the body of the victim. If this is impossible, the sorcerer must be satisfied with the photograph alone. He may then try to get at least the signature or a sample of handwriting to use in the operation. With the magnetic contact established, the harm can be done to any organ of the body of the subject of the picture, by inflicting "wounds" with sharp tools carefully prepared for that purpose by special ritualistic proceedings.

Sometimes only the power of a curse may be used, and in such a case the magnetic contact may not necessarily be of the primitive sort, as mentioned in the first example of black magic attack. A *figure of wax* may be made, named (with special ritual) after the victim, and then used as the fulcrum of the evil currents, aroused by the will power of the sorcerer. In such cases the harm done often takes the form of an accident or other catastrophe, but not necessarily a sickness or disability.

Another sort of evil action often consists of sending strong and disturbing *astromental currents* (vortexes), which may reach the person at whom they are aimed, causing nervous and mental disorders, depressions, and sometimes permanent psychic sickness, suicide, and so on. Depending on the intensity of the action and of the lack of defense on the side of the person attacked, the result may end in death or insanity.

What has just been described does not enumerate all the ways in which black magic operates, for these differ according to the ingenuity of the sorcerer; but, on broad lines, the material mentioned may give a general idea, which has been my present aim.

Now we can pass on to more interesting matters, that is, *how one should resist* the evil actions of hostile magicians. In the occult tradition there are many means given for the purpose. Instead of enumerating them, I will limit myself to general instructions, which are more flexible and therefore more illuminating.

We should know that no attack of magic can succeed against a person who does not harbor any evil thoughts or feelings similar to those of the attacker. In practice, this means that *no saint can be harmed by evil men.* For only a saint really has a pure mind and heart. The astral arrows and all forms of magic described at the beginning of this chapter *can reach their targets only when they find some affinity in them.*

But how many men can satisfy such a condition?

Therefore we can accept that in general every person can be affected by concentrated evil will when it is directed at him. Advanced occultists, although not yet free from all blemishes, may well know some technicalities that allow them to fight the offenders; just as, in the physical realm, those who know such special means of self-defense as judo are able to defy the attack of even a much stronger person, by using their knowledge of anatomy and speedy counterblows.

A few of such countermeasures are given in more detail in *Concentration.* Apart from this, there is a very effective means against any magician, and it is accessible to everyone, even though not a Saint or learned occultist. It is superb in its simplicity. When you suspect that someone is trying to exercise an evil influence on you or someone else, *FORGIVE him whole-heartedly.* Think about him without any anger or dislike. This is most essential; then try to realize the moral weakness that compels him to commit such a harmful action (principally for himself), as trying to injure a brother man. *Be compassionate with him, and wish him everything good, the inner enlightenment and Grace of the Almighty.* If you are sincere and persistent in such a meditation, no harm will be done by the most malicious of black magicians. Moreover, the whole evil power used by him against you *will invariably rebound on him, multiplied many times by the law of repercussion.* But this last event should not even be remembered by you while using the

weapon of forgiveness. If even the slightest thought appears in your consciousness that the offender may be punished because of your defense *it will then become quite useless and you will not save yourself from the attacking forces.*

There are some techniques that facilitate the above-mentioned way of counteraction. They are based on the cooperation of your mind. An example will serve best. Many years ago, when I used to spend my university vacation periods in a little provincial town, I used to ride on my bicycle to the nearby river, through a quiet surburban street, seldom used by passersby. My friend with whom I was lodging at the time was himself interested in things occult, and told me that in that street there lived an old woman who, people said, was a witch and had an extremely evil eye. "If she catches your sight, wishing to harm you, something unpleasant may result from the fact: a sudden sickness, often incurable, or an accident or other disaster. Apparently it had been proved many times; but, of course, it was impossible to prosecute the evil-doer. Once when a man—whose wife was allegedly bereft of her senses by the witch—wanted to give her a thrashing, he was paralyzed in a few days and died soon afterwards."

At that time I was very young and enthusiastic about everything concerning occultism and magic. I already knew about some techniques of defense and decided to put them into practice. From a rare book I chose the following method against the *evil eye* and witchcraft. When encountered, one must immediately imagine in one's heart a quietly burning lamp, like those used in churches behind the altars; its rosy light must suggest all-forgiving love, just as Christ forgave His torturers. The light should radiate from one's heart in all directions, and *no other thought should dare to enter the mind* at that moment.

In my occult practices I had been trained for such a proceeding. So I could be reasonably sure of myself in the case of necessity of using it in self-defense. Anyway, it soon happened that I was returning through the ominous street after my usual swim. It was just before twilight merges into the darkness of night. Suddenly I saw an old woman crossing the narrow, dusty street, carrying a bucket of water in each hand. I used my small bicycle bell to warn her. But she just stopped in the middle of the street and looked at me angrily. I decided to accept the challenge. Riding with reduced speed, I slowly passed her. Our eyes met. Suddenly I had a very unpleasant impression of the cold look of a poisonous

snake. But at the same moment the "lamp" flashed in my breast, just in the region of the heart. I had used my defense. The ominous impression was erased in the fraction of a second. With the mysterious, rosy light in my heart came peace and compassion for the poor witch. I think I repeated subconsciously, "Lord Christ, forgive her as you forgave your torturers!" Then my cycle passed the woman, and behind me I heard a sudden metallic clatter of falling buckets, and the noise of flowing water. The old woman stood immobilized in the middle of the puddle, with her hands hanging down helplessly, while her lips seemed to move without producing any sound. Later, I was told that she became very ill and died. All this might be only a coincidence, but I was sure that it was quite different.

Other weapons used by black magicians are the so-called *magic potions and mixtures* secretly administered to victims for drinking and eating. In my opinion these do not actually belong to any true occult means, but are rather kinds of poison. Anyway, apart from sometimes charging these material conductors of evil will with negative magnetism, the harm also comes from their chemical components. "Magnetized" mixtures composed of repulsive ingredients—having their origin in fluids connected with sex—are often used as love potions in order to attract the desired person; but sometimes, also, in order to deprive the victim of sexual potency.

There still remains the definition of ceremonial magic that was so cleverly exposed in the second half of the nineteenth century by Eliphas Levi, Stanislas de Guaita, and Dr. Papus. Its basis is the theory that spirits or elementals, that is, beings possessing only two planes of manifestation (astral and mental), can be temporarily subdued or implored by men, in spite of the latter's comparative weakness. I shall explain only the main ideas. We know that even in the physical world not necessarily the strongest muscles decide the result of a competition or fight. There are also other factors.

When dealing with two-plane beings (that is, spirits, and so on) as told in the classical books on magic, a man must find something in which he appears to be the stronger and able to give them orders, which they have to obey. Firstly, there are astrological conditions that are favorable to humans and at the same time unfavorable to spirits, as

states the old tradition of magic. At certain times the invisible ones are more inclined to come and negotiate with human beings than at others.

Secondly, certain drawings that appear to us as being merely collections of different lines and figures have their own hidden meanings sensible in the astromental realm. They are called *pentacles*. The best known are the triangle, pentagram, hexagram, septagram, and others in which the operators have inscribed some magic letters (usually those of the old Hebrew alphabet), numbers, or the so-called signatures of spirits, and other symbols. It is said that a well-executed pentacle appears, in the worlds invisible to us, as a *powerful instrument* that compels the inhabitants to approach and take orders from the operating magician. Strong concentration and the pronouncing of special exorcisms saturates the pentacles with power, which are then as if filled with fire that streams along their lines.

The *effects of sounds* such as the names of God, His angels, prophets, or even very eminent occultists and magicians from the past, who succeeded in subduing large numbers of spirits, are also important factors in ceremonial magic, and widely used.

Then there are special *incenses and perfumes* used for magic operations. But all this is highly artificial and uncertain. There are many legends telling of revolts among the spirits invoked by some unsuccessful magicians, who were not able to deal with the powers that they wished to rule. Tradition tells us that fear or the *slightest error in the performance of the ritual* may easily lead to the doom of those who attempt to play with forces that they cannot properly control.

However, *under certain conditions* spirits or elementals can be subdued and compelled to serve. At the same time, extreme caution is recommended. For a magician can exert his power on the invisible forces *only for as long as he has certain superiority over them*—in this case having one body (physical) more than they have. But when he dies, all his elaborate structure collapses, the spirits do not obey any more, and sometimes even exact terrible vengeance from those who compelled them to serve.

In occult circles there is a well-known story about Dr. Papus and the Russian Czar Nicholas II, which is a striking example of this.

After the defeat in the war against Japan in 1905, the whole of Russia was afire with revolution. Strikes, stoppages of transport, political kill-

ings, and wholesale disorders brought the throne of Nicholas II to the verge of a fall. His superstitious Czarina tried every means from continuous praying in church to invitations to different rogues who might save the shaking dynasty.

At last the Czar decided to call the famous French occultist and magician, Papus (Dr. Gérard Encausse) to him, in order to conjure and control the spirits of the growing revolution and to save his throne. Papus came to St. Petersburg. In the deciding talk with the Czar, he pointed out that he could actually bind and stop the spirits that manifested themselves in the fiery revolutionary movement in Russia (see chapter "Egregors"). But his power would be *effective only until his (Papus') death*. For then the rage and hatred of the spirits inimical to the Russian dynasty, which were deeply entrenched in the Russian people, would break the magic bonds and their vengeance would be terrible.

When stating this, Papus tried to dissuade the unlucky monarch from the use of such dangerous means. But Nicholas, at the moment of hearing that it was possible positively to curb the hated revolutionary wave, did not give much thought to the future predicted by the cautious French magician. "Save my throne and family" he hastily told Papus "and do not bother about the future."

In the mysterious operations of ceremonial magic that he subsequently performed, Papus succeeded in chaining the raging spirits, and the revolution slowly ebbed. Then came World War I and 1916, when early in the autumn of that year the French occultist died. A few weeks after that, in October 1916, a mighty wave of revolution reappeared in Russia. This time there was no salvation. Early in the Spring of 1917, Nicholas II had to abdicate, and he and his family were placed in confinement. His cousin and old personal friend, King George V of England, made an effort to save his dear Nicky by trying to arrange for a British warship to go to Petersburg and bring back the Romanovs to the security of England. The then Provisional Russian Government of Prince Lvov apparently was not opposed to this move. But this time the obstacle came from the British House of Commons, which prevented the Government from fulfilling the King's desire. George V could never forget this and remained bitter about it to the end of his days.

The ensuing cruel extermination by the Communists of the Czar and his family, including his daughters and sickly boy Alexis, the Crown

Prince, shocked the world. When Admiral Koltchak's counterrevolutionary troops temporarily occupied the city of Ekaterinburg, in which the murders took place, their special Investigating Committee (under the French General Janin) discovered the charred remains of the Romanovs' burned bodies at the bottom of an unused mine.

It was said that, immediately after the execution, an unknown hand had written on the bullet-riddled wall some mysterious words, using for ink blood from the pools on the floor of the death cellar. There was talk of the old Hebrew alphabet having been used and that the words meant "the vengeance duly performed" or "the tyrant has been slaughtered in vengeance."

In these days magic has by no means ceased to exist, but its outer forms have changed very much. There are no longer legends about old women flying on their long brooms at midnight, and so on. But harm is still being done, when some persons who are deprived of conscience want to take revenge without coming into collision with the law. In many large cities of the West there probably still exist groups of satanists, as such neurotic and degenerate persons call themselves. Human nature even in its deepest degradation still likes to have some justification or support even for its repulsive activities. So they say that "they serve another god, that of darkness," that is, the Devil. Perhaps the revolting black mass is still performed, which is a perversion of the Church service and connected with gross and pathological debauchery and orgies.

But here there is no room or place to delve into those decadent stories. To resume, it may be said that magic is not a way for man's inner progress. It is not durable (its results do not survive one's incarnation), nor does it alleviate *Karma*, but rather brings new dangers of burdening it.

Also, because it is too hard for a man who still is not free from egoism and desires, or *vasanas*, to refrain from committing mistakes when some greater powers have been placed in his hands by the successful practice of magic.

XLIII

The Egyptian Tarot

Many earnestly studying occultists may, at some period of their work, come into contact with the symbols and philosophy of the ancient Egyptian *Tarot*, the origin of which lies hidden in the far-off past of human culture and searching thought.

There is no doubt that the 22 major Arcana (or trumps) of the *Tarot* —allegedly representing (according to classical occult tradition) the total amount of knowledge possible in the past, present, and future of the human race on this earth—were usually carved on the columns of the most secret initiatory temples of Egypt, deep underground. Moses borrowed ideas from them for his sacred books.

With the ending of ancient Egypt as an independent state and with the destruction of its culture by invading barbarians, its initiatory activities apparently ceased to exist in the approaching Graeco-Roman era. And now in the twentieth century the Arcana (or trumps) of the *Tarot* can be used by all those who seek knowledge in them. How could they have been transmitted?

The most interesting of the tales about the *Tarot*'s preservation appears in a book about it by Dr. Papus, *Tarot des Bohémiens*. I shall give it here in brief. Shortly before the conquest of Egypt by the Persians, its priests and initiates recognized from astrological signs and other secret sources of revelation that their country was doomed to destruction. Their foremost anxiety was the way in which to preserve and transfer the treasures of their wisdom collected in the thousands of years of Egypt's flourishing life. At one of the last meetings two proposals were offered. One of them was to entrust the essence of the wisdom to human virtue, which might preserve it for the generations to come.

But others disagreed. Human virtue is too fragile, uncertain, and unstable a thing, said one old priest. Let us better use human vice as a

carrier: this is always present, and will not perish while there are men on this earth. The assembly agreed and the idea was accepted. Many sets of metal and leather tablets were prepared, covered with secret signs under which, amongst cumbersome figures and symbols, the whole doctrine was concealed. A form of play was invented in order to use the cards for gambling purposes. When the invaders came they too were caught up by the lust of playing with the strange cards, whose meaning remained unknown to them. Undergoing different subsequent variations, the *Tarot* traveled to almost all countries of the world. Apart from the European style of the *Tarot*, Indian and Chinese versions of play with its cards are also known.

In its present, considerably restored form, based on the famous *Claviculae Salomonis* made in many copies by Eliphas Levi, the *Tarot* is composed of 78 cards. The first group numbered from 1 to 22 is called the Great or Major Arcana. Its symbols are divided into three great and seven small triangles, which represent both man and the world, that is, the microcosm and the macrocosm. All possible combinations contained in both can be discovered by the wise Hermetist, that is, a follower of Hermetic philosophy symbolized in the *Tarot*, from these 22 mysterious tablets.

There is no room in this chapter to give any exact descriptions and to unveil the true meaning of the *Tarot* to its full extent. Voluminous books have been written on the subject (see the foremost works of Eliphas Levi, Dr. Papus, Stanilas de Guaita, Claude de St. Martin, P. D. Ouspensky, as well as an encyclopaedic course on the *Tarot* by the writer, which is at present under preparation).

But no one has been able to expound the whole immense system of Hermetic thought in one work.

Here I shall limit myself to a broad outline. The *Tarot* is not a spiritual conception or system like the doctrines of Christ, Vedanta, or Buddhism. But strangely enough, in the ultimate depths of its ideas one can see the *dawn of the immaterial Light*, independent of all the three worlds in which Hermeticism operates. And few are those who have been lucky enough and able to penetrate into this last Great Arcanum.

The basis of the *Tarot* is the three planes well known to all occultists:

1. The physical world of dense matter with all its variations, forms of life, inhabitants, laws, and possibilities.

2. The world of the more subtle concentration of matter, which far exceeds the finest physical ones, known as gases and so on. It is called the plane of emotions, or the astral world. Invisible to the ordinary eye, this vast region extends and penetrates into all physical matter. Our vehicles of consciousness also include an astral counterpart as well as the mental one; but generally we are unable to operate consciously and deliberately with either of these two subtle bodies. They are unlike the physical one, which seems to be fairly well under control, since we can move it, perform innumerable activities, feel it, see it, and so on. A physical liaison with the astral counterpart is located in the solar plexus.
3. This is a still more subtle combination of matter that corresponds to vibrations of the power we call mind, and whose visible conductor is the brain.

What is the meaning of all the aforesaid? Just that the *Tarot*'s philosophical and occult system is like the algebra of mathematicians. Although the higher scientific concepts of differential calculus, etc., actually by far transcend the possibilities of algebra alone. They are unthinkable without the basic knowledge of the latter.

So it is with the *Tarot* in relation to any reasonable, scientifically built occult system: it is the basis, the universal blueprint for followers. Any occult research can be safely patterned on the *Tarot*'s keys, only gaining by the application of that ancient wisdom. Of course, all this is valid only for those who are specially inclined to this kind of study and investigation. The *Tarot* is neutral; neither good nor evil in itself, just like figures that can express any quantity, suitable or unsuitable, true or false.

The whole system is based on the universal principle that manifests itself in every sphere of life. We may call it the Law (Tetragrammaton of Hermetists). The symbols used are letters of the old Hebrew alphabet, plus figures and numbers. Three veils for three worlds. This is comfortable, for knowing the meaning of such a letter-symbol, etc., that is, the fixed idea behind it, we can operate just as a mathematician does with algebraic formulas and terms. It is also very valuable for those who, being tired of the usual occult bungling that occurs at the present time, want to found their studies on a firm basis, without sacrificing their reason and logical thinking.

A short example may serve to show how the principles of the *Tarot*

operate. From the technical point of view I have abstained from giving the Hebrew letters in their original form, limiting myself to their phonetic terms.

The great law, which I have already mentioned, is the same for all the three worlds in which we may employ the *Tarot*.

1. If there is any manifestation in time and space (this does not necessarily mean only the three-dimensional physical space), then there must be *first the acting element* or power that initiates (or begins) the process. We symbolize it by the figure one (1), and letter Yod. This element is positive, dynamic, and active. The picture on the FIRST Arcanum (or Trump) of the *Tarot* represents a man, standing with one leg crossed. He is sometimes called a magician.

   The same three qualities as given above are ascribed to and connected with the figure 1 and the letter Yod.
2. Apart from the active primary principle (or as some would prefer, creation) there is still a second element necessary for manifestation, which element being the receptacle, a screen, something to serve as a basis or fulcrum for the active Yod.

   This element is passive, negative, and material. Its number is of course two (2), the Hebrew letter He, and the picture on the card is of a seated woman.
3. When Yod acts upon He, the third principle appears, having the number three (3) and letter Vau. It is the result of the action, it is neutral, reflecting in itself the qualities of the first and second trumps of the *Tarot*, just like a child depending upon its parents.
4. The primary THREE as a whole forms a new unit, the first family, metaphysically conceived on the most subtle plane of being, next after the unmanifested, immaterial Absolute.

   This element bears the number four (4); its letter is the SECOND He. This letter is not passive as in the second Arcanum, but active, being the Yod of the next triangle. It is essential to realize this, for only then can the mighty idea of the Tetragrammaton (Yod-He-Vau-He) be properly understood. Incidentally, the reader has probably noticed that the Tetragrammaton is identical with the biblical, mysterious NAME OF GOD.

The fourth trump creates a new unit (triangle) as was stated

above, producing new, more complicated forms of manifestation in the gradually arising, more densely material lower worlds.

This law works on every plane of existence. In the abstruse (abstract) realm we already had a look at it. On the astral plane, for example, it can be expressed as: impulse (1) plus astral surroundings (2) creates emotion (3). The whole will form what we call experience, or the emotional process in man. Man (Yod), wife (He) and child (Vau) are a unit (second He) of a new quality and of extended activity (4) able to repeat the primordial process in a wider field.

The first FOUR form the primary symbolical triangle of the *Tarot*. Its upper point is 1 = Yod; left is 2 = He; right is 3 = Vau. The point placed in the middle of this triangle being also the FIRST point of the new one, is 4 = second He. It is equal to the Yod of the first projection of force. To this come new seeds, as in the first case: a new 2 = He, while 3 = Vau, and so on.

On this scheme are constructed seven mystical triangles of the 22 Major Arcana of the *Tarot*. Each one has a different meaning and relation to the manifested world.

On it is also based the whole numerology of Hermeticism. Because any number can be reduced to one of the primary four, that is 1, 2, 3, 4, the process is usually called the theosophical addition or reduction.* Add all the figures of the particular number until they reach the single figured one. Because it is necessary for you to know the meaning of all the figures beyond the four of the first triangle, you should now build the second and third triangles, using the method described above.

Then you will know that: the Yod's are: 1, 4, 7, that is, active, positive, male. The first He: 2, 5, 8, negative, passive, female. Vau: 3, 6, 9, neutral, with balanced elements of Yod and He in them. The number 10 is of course Yod because: 10 = 1 + 0 = 1. Proceed the same with all following numbers.

It is presumed that even the beginner-student of the *Tarot* has firmly memorized all that you have just read and that he knows exactly the meaning of all the 22 Major Arcana, as well as their symbolic cards and hieroglyphs. I cannot extend these particulars any more in this chapter.

* The meaning of this term has nothing in common with the Theosophical Movement, and is much older than 1875 (the foundation year of the T.S).

Anyway, until these things are well established in one's mind, no study is possible.

There is another basic operation with the Major Arcana, and an example may be illuminating. But instead of addition we will now use analysis. As you already know to a certain degree about the first triangle, we may take, say, the third Trump, then: $3 = 1 + 2$. We may read the equation, in its physical realm, as: child (3) has in itself element (1) father, and (2) mother. You may continue the same for other planes.

The fourth Trump. In it: $4 = 3 + 1$. This time we may take the mental-plane meaning of the analysis and we read: new creation (4) proceeds from the foregoing evolutionary unit (3), when a new active element (1) has been added.

As you may see, the possibility of creating exact and new conceptions with the help of the *Tarot*'s numerology is practically unlimited. Try to calculate how many combinations you can arrange of all the 22 Arcana, when even with a low numerical value, as for example, that of 4, you can already obtain the following equations:

$4 = 3 + 1; 4 = 2 + 2; 4 = 1 + 3; 4 = 2 + 1 + 1$, and so on.

Moreover, the happenings in our own and those of other people's lives may be better understood when the algebra of occultism is basically known to us. For human lives cannot escape the universal law expressed in the great Tetragrammaton. What has been said here about the *Tarot*, although informative, is only an infinitesimal part of what is known about it. Many books have been written by most eminent authors and still the problem is far from being studied to the end, as such does not exist for the *Tarot*, it being only a pattern into which everyone can inject new life by using his living mind and intuition.

Excellent books by the writers mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter are a very good introduction. However, the work proper belongs to the student. There is one contemporary work about the Tarot written in Russian by Professor G. O. M. (only his initials are given), under the title of: *Encyclopaedic Course of the Ancient Tarot*. The author was the intellectual master of P. D. Ouspensky in the latter's younger years. In the late twenties I saw a very imperfect translation of that unique book, which had an unattractive outer form. Otherwise that strange and by no means readily accessible exposition has long since been forgotten, except by those who had the privilege of studying

it in their early years. No one, not even from the ranks of the previously mentioned eminent Hermeticists, has been able to create such a scientific and masterly analysis and synthesis with the Major Trumps of the *Tarot* as did G. O. M.

The remaining minor Arcana, that is, the 56 cards roughly similar to our usual playing cards, have less impressive meanings than those of the major ones. But they are often used in connection with the latter, especially *for fortune-telling*. Exact explanations would need a separate book and not merely a brief exposition. My purpose here has been to give the reader, not yet acquainted with the *Tarot*, a reasonable understanding of its basic elements and method of construction.

As all mental conceptions that can possibly arise in the human kind can be deduced from the infinite combinations of ideas and symbols according to the tradition of the *Tarot*, which is recognized by all writers on the subject, so one is free in his interpretations of the Arcana and the relationship between them.

But there are two principal directions for interpretation. The first, a *classical one*, analyzes the major Arcana in their numerical order, that is from the 1st to the 22nd. But tradition also says that in the Egyptian initiatory temples the symbols of the *Tarot* were placed in TWO rows, 11 in each. The late philosopher and mystic P. D. Ouspensky, who wrote his interesting booklet about the *Tarot* in 1912, and later included it as a chapter of his famous *A New Model of the Universe*, preferred to consider the sequence of the major trumps differently, *placing them opposite one another*, as if they were in two rows.

So, according to his conception, the Arcana should be analyzed not in their numerical order that is 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., but: 1 paired with 22, 2 with 21, 3 with 20, and so on. He even says that, seen from the other (numerical) point of view, they cannot be satisfactorily explained.

But the West European school insists on the classical way, and in their works its authoritative writers reached initiatory results no less extensive and brilliant than Ouspensky's.

My own opinion is rather two-sided: both theories can be used, and the one does not exclude the other. The latest studies on the *Tarot*, based on the *Encyclopaedic Course of the Ancient Tarot* of Professor G. O. M., uses the theosophical operations widely, which have been partially explained in this chapter. It is easy to realize that by conduct-

ing these operations far enough we will inevitably come to combinations none other than those used by Ouspensky. In my own works about the *Tarot*, I have naturally preferred the *wider conception*, while not forgetting the beautiful and poetical analysis of Ouspensky, which in my opinion is only a part of the classical tradition.

All adepts of the *Tarot* speak of it with the utmost enthusiasm. They ascribe a lot of properties to it, such as: the solving of any mental problems, and the balancing of one's *karma* by proper consultation of the *Tarot*'s cards and consequently acting in accordance with the revealed data. If the power of concentration has been added to the *Tarot*'s study, one may become a great magician or occult master, while those thirsty for power or wealth can also use the knowledge of the Arcana if such is their aim. As the *Tarot* is related to all the three worlds in which we normally live, there is little wonder that so much power is ascribed to it. In conclusion I would like to remind the reader that the knowledge of egregors, prototypes, and reincarnation, mentioned in this book—is only a part of the Hermetic philosophical system which we call the *Tarot*.

XLIV

Occult Frauds

Apart from the many irresponsible books on occult themes, another and much greater evil has now appeared. Some organizations, almost exclusively of Western origin, have managed to obtain a few scraps of occult practices from some unscrupulous men who often pose as Yogis or even spiritual Masters. Providing he pays a regular subscription, every member of such an organization (whose names need not be mentioned here, as competent readers will quickly recognize them), is entitled and even persuaded to put into practice some fragmentary exercises designed to awaken the hidden forces latent in man.

Excited by the cleverly suggested mystery and alleged possibility of

obtaining superphysical powers, and devoured by the vice of curiosity, men are only too willing to pay for initiatory pamphlets and instructions. If these are only a hoax (as usually happens) or if the prospective initiate lacks the necessary will power and persistance to perform exactly what he has been told, then the evil is not so great. Even so, such disappointed individuals often begin to consider everything spoken and written about occultism and even spiritual things as pure humbug and just a means for extracting money from naïve folk. Then they become cynical and materialistic.

But if such sealed and secret monographs, and so on, contain some real instructions on occult and psychical practices, and if the future adept is persistent and stubborn in his efforts to become a superman, then he might get a premature glimpse of a corner of the astromental double or counterpart of this visible and sentient world.

We know that every power can be used for both good and evil purposes. Now supposing that a good and an evil man are both using some special physical exercises for athletic training, in order to become stronger than average; the mere fact of acquiring strong muscles will not thereby change their true characters. The one man as before will continue to use his new powers for good, while the other will merely strengthen his misdeeds with the more powerful means at his disposal. So we can assume that the same will be done by wise and ignorant individuals. Moreover, everyone is able to see just as much of certain parts of the astromental counterparts of the physical world as allowed by his own limited point of view and level of development.

So, for example, a Saint on becoming clairvoyant after hs purification will usually perceive something like heaven or a higher double of this world. While an average man—or sinner, as we term our fellow men—will see, according to his limited field of vision, only what corresponds to his own morality and mentality. It might sometimes be like a little hell.

In this way, many of those who illegally pierce the protective veils of the other worlds are able to see some terrible things, and to encounter many evil influences; for they are unable to avoid contacting the inferior manifestations existing on that plane. This is because they are unable to resist *earthly temptations, for by such resistance is measured the inner strength of a man.*

Those who have knowledge of the higher degrees of *Advaita* will be

aware that these so-called superior and less materialistic worlds are just as illusory to the eye of Wisdom as that of the humble physical plane; for those ignorant of this the counterparts of the visible world are as real as the physical world itself and in their view nothing can change the alleged reality of their experiences.

Recently, some false teachers, in order to arouse more interest and curiosity in their self-styled teachings, have invented some new types of Yoga, complete with elaborate names. But actually, these creations have little in common with the seven classic forms of the true Yoga, which is supported by the authority of the ancient and contemporary Masters, or Gurus.

Among these false Yogas, I would like to mention only one of the most malicious and harmful, which operates on the mystical channels in the human spine (*Shusumna*, *Ida*, and *Pingala*). By using different methods of breath control, mental concentration, and visualization processes taken from some illegally divulged fragments of occult science, some unfortunates are able to develop certain superphysical senses and to contact the lower kind of entities of the astromental plane. As they are not yet Saints or disciples of a true spiritual Master, who would definitely forbid any adventures of this kind, what counterpart of the physical world can they hope to see? Only the worst one, related to their own ignorance and lack of inner balance.

Then we begin to hear complaints of malicious obsessions, evil influences from bad spirits, nervous disorders, and finally, physical ruin. And who is responsible for all this? Why not the real criminals, the false Yogis and occultists, who have sown these evil seeds?

The eagerly sought clairvoyance, and so on, becomes a curse for the weak and ignorant man. This is no escape from this rule. Inner peace becomes an impossibility for the victim. This is because men are seeking salvation in a wrong way, by consulting fraudulent occultists and so becoming easy prey for all unscrupulous exploiters and also ignorant people who think that they really know something.

Then physical health and senses decline, bringing more troubles for the sufferers. Instead of raising their status to that of masters of the astromental world, they merely become slaves of the lower kinds of entities existing in it. The outcome usually results in family dramas, sickness, loss of balance, and finally a mental home. Sometimes crimes are committed by these unfortunates who have lost their poise and self-

possession. Although the full responsibility lies with the false and criminal masters who originated the evil, the sufferings of their followers are not diminished by the fact.

The worst is that most beginners believe that they will be *an exception* and that they can smuggle themselves into a forbidden realm, even though warned of the dangers attending a premature mingling with other planes before the personality has been purified by a really good life.

They seem to think that the process of moral and mental advancement can be performed somewhere else and at a later date. This never happens for it is not possible. If a man is unable to purify his own nature in familiar earthly conditions, how can he hope to do it under utterly different circumstances, in exceptionally unfavorable surroundings, and so on? But the price of ignorance must be paid as was previously explained.

It is true that spiritually awakened persons, especially those who have a true Master as their defender and friend, may get many of the *siddhis* (use of occult powers) in the course of their advancement; but these are only additions to their inner powers and developed consciousness. They never strive after such additions and do not use them, except occasionally, and then only with the consent of the Master. They do not seek for anything in other worlds, for the vice of curiosity has long since been extinguished in them. But, *if they come to the astromental plane, they do it as masters, as strong and fearless ones, and not as slaves*: unlike the misguided victims of the false Yogas and their teachers. Therein lies the cardinal difference, as can easily be seen.

It also happens that otherwise well-intentioned Yogis often give their pupils (mostly Westerners) far too many indications about the secret methods of psychic development, and these are later misused. But, Yogis are themselves partially in ignorance, as firmly stated the Maharshi.

This great spiritual Master has said, pointing out our true and legitimate aim of life: "THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE REALIZATION OF ONE'S TRUE SELF IS INFINITELY GREATER THAN ALL THE SIDDHIS PUT TOGETHER!"

Can there be anything more enlightening for erring aspirants? Operations with the spinal currents, enforced rhythmical breathing, unnatural postures, hypnotic practices, and so on, may put a man into the

position of an unarmed diver, thrown into a sea infested with hungry sharks. This must be avoided at any price.

The explanation: "that one wishes to get more power *in order* to help others" is a falsity; for one who is unable to help with his present ability will never think about it after obtaining *siddhis*. He is simply lying to himself and others.

This chapter has been written in response to numerous letters from persons endangered by their own lack of discrimination in things occult, who have put themselves into a position from which there is almost no exit. Also, the writer has read many of these initiatory pamphlets and monographs, sent to him by some bitterly disillusioned persons who have pointed out the harmful role being played by the false Yogis and occultists, who sell their doubtful wares for a dear price in comparison with the actual value. They are true criminals, although human legislation as yet does not classify such misdeeds in its penal codes.

The first condition of all true spiritual attainment forever remains, independent of the system followed, the reaching of the *higher moral status*, which will guarantee the honesty of our aims. Without performing this, even the Master will not accept an unworthy aspirant as a disciple. All powers will bow to a good person, even if he has never practiced any occult exercises. The Master awaits such disciples. Christ told us: "Who serves men, will be served by angels." (See also His Sermon on the Mount.)

It is the lower element in man, his vampirelike ego, which tries to tap illegally the occult powers, but not his radiant, omniscient, and omnipotent Self-*Atman*, eternally present in both you and me. Which Master do you prefer to serve?

There is a means for judging whether or not a person is worthy of our attention, who likes to be admired as a "master," who gives particular instructions about details, but not about the main direction of our conduct, and who plays on our vice of curiosity and thirst for power over others. It is simply this: if under some influence we feel that we become better, wiser, more tolerant, and full of love for all living things, then we should consider the matter seriously, for it might be our true Path. But if we receive only some scraps of doubtful occult secrets under the label of initiations, and so on, then we can be sure

that the author or the alleged "master" is a rogue. There cannot be the slightest doubt if, in addition, we are asked to pay for the lessons, and if such revelations are easily accessible to anyone irrespective of his qualifications to receive certain knowledge. The true Master of Wisdom lays the greatest emphasis on the qualities of the prospective disciple, and these are the only deciding factors. He will never try to give us something unsuitable or premature.

But the occult criminals act differently, especially if they accidentally come into the possession of some minor secrets; for then they are ready to communicate the most unsuitable and dangerous things to anyone who is prepared to pay openly, or often in a cleverly concealed form.

Among all the societies of an occult character—and some of them are strictly secret and inaccessible to the average man—I know of very few that would spoil their mystical inheritance by selling their secrets to the public at large. One of them is the well-known Theosophical Society; fortunately, in its publications you will not find any propaganda, occult tricks, or divulgence of things that could be harmful.

The great religions of the world also know much more than their average adherents could possibly imagine. But they too do not speak about forbidden matters. Occasionally I have found in some Christian denominations almost complete expositions of the hidden side of things, containing details about the life before birth and after death, dwellers of the superphysical planes, and the conditions of human consciousness in states other than physical, and so on, all of which are claimed by some occult organizations as "their unique and exclusive privilege." Instinctively an old proverb comes to mind: "There is nothing new under the sun."

Many clear-thinking people are now gravely concerned over the popularization of occultism, which was doing so well fifty years ago, because they know that men are able to pervert knowledge, and almost everything good, when it falls into improper hands. We can see for ourselves the depths to which men can sink, when we read in the Gospels that some learned Pharisees dared to interpret the miracles of Jesus Christ as coming from the Devil himself.

No wonder, then, that their corresponding numbers in this age, try to sow the evils described in this chapter.

And for that they may be called criminals or frauds. True discrimina-

tion is the foremost virtue necessary for each sincere seeker, striving for more Light and Wisdom.

XLV

A Deeper Sense of Fraternity

The idea of an all human fraternity is becoming popular these days, although mostly only in theory. Apart from some cheap and inadequate conceptions of brotherhood as such, there is a deeper, philosophical basis that makes fraternity a reflection of the Unique Truth, being the essence of all Life.

If we recognize all men as our brothers, without the differences of color and caste, it means that we refer to something far beyond the outer visible conditions and properties of human beings. For it is quite evident that we cannot reach any unity in our bodily forms, since these differ so greatly in physical construction as well as in mental outlook, even between men of the same race. Human bodies are not all the same, for racial distinction does undoubtedly exist as between such peoples as Negroes, Indians, Europeans, Malayans, Eskimaux, and so on.

When acknowledging the basic fraternity of men, we consciously (but more often unconsciously) recognize something that is COMMON to all men, although it is not visible as are the physical bodies. This is none other than the COMMON CURRENT OF LIFE, which is active in all of us. And it is just this that can really unite us all, in spite of our different colors and other qualities.

From this statement it should be easy for us to take another step forward, to the immortal Principle that manifests itself as the various forms of life throughout eternity, and is our link in the philosophically conceived idea of fraternity.

Down the ages, this Principle has been given innumerable names and definitions, Soul, Spirit, Wave of Life, God's Breath, God's Life,

Absolute Essence of Existence, and many more. Everyone can provide his own preferred conception as it makes no difference.

Today we are in a much better position to understand, for about fifty years ago humanity received a newly revealed and practically stated idea of the universal or true Self, which in order to avoid confusion with our well-known self or ego we may call the Overself.

Now things are clearer: for as the true Self is ONE, so then all men, not thought of as temporary mortal manifestations, must necessarily be essentially one, no matter how perfect or imperfect this Self-God appears in us and our neighbors. How can we fail to love it in others?

Fraternity should never be confused with the false idea of the so-called "equality" of men, for in this world, where there is light, there is also shadow. Fraternity is truth and therefore a fact; but the idea of general equality is wrong since it does not exist. If an example is needed, compare contemporary great men such as Dr. Albert Schweitzer or Professor Albert Einstein with a primitive South African bushman or a New Guinea native. And if we can realize what has been said about fraternity, we will recognize that we are all brothers, but are far from being equal among ourselves. Great Teachers have stated this clearly: Christ spoke of "casting pearls before swine"; Buddha hinted that "not all men are able to reach Nirvana at once"; while the Maharshi expounded the same, still more definitely—as has already been mentioned in this book—when he compared the development (that is, the capacity to understand Truth) of different types of men to the ability of certain substances to catch fire.

The Wise treat men according to their development and speak and teach to suit their audiences. We do the same in our everyday life, as no one would talk to a child in the same way as to an adult. But we know that the child is nevertheless a human being and is only awaiting full growth.

So fraternity is a fact, truth, and reality since it is Life itself, manifesting through innumerable forms of being. And because of this some occult and mystical organizations place allegiance to this basic truth as a condition for admittance.

But fraternity should not be confounded with equality, which does not exist as such. When equality is enforced in the social or political fields, there is a general lowering of the average level of society to that

of the lowest individuals, because it is infinitely easier to do that than to create a standard higher than that existing before.

XLVI

Marriage

Why do men and women marry? There are various contributing factors. Usually, there is a subconscious urge within us, in accordance with Nature's laws for the preservation of physical life on a planet for the period of its existence. The same law compels animals to mate. But a human being is much more complicated than an animal, which just blindly obeys the law. Many of us seek to replace the solitude of the ego by a substitute for unity, and so enter into marriage as into an egoism of two, instead of only one.

Such persons are able to make certain sacrifices, but only for the sake of their partners or children. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as one remains on the level of relativity. The sparks of Spirit (this is not an adequate or strict expression, but it is hard to find something better) still not sufficiently developed to transcend the separate egoistic existence in separate bodies need those bodies for incarnation.

The forbears, the parents, provide the bodies. If nature did not inspire in men the love of family and children, these would be only a burden, and who likes to bear burdens without reward? In this case, the apparent reward is just the innate love for spouse and descendants. Anyway, every animal is the same. For example, what compels an ordinary mother-cat to sacrifice her life without any hesitation in the defense of her young, fighting against numbers of much stronger dogs? The instinctive law is speaking through her. At the same time, such a cat does not fight any human who approaches her kittens, even to take them from her.

Sexual attraction and passion serve as visible expressions of the law

for the prolongation of physical life, on the planet. Although in animals the sex instinct is simple, in human beings it is highly complicated. Beauty, intelligence, poise, vigor, and health, all much desired, are the qualities needed for physically superior descendants. Subconsciously we like and seek these qualities, for according to biological law these are transmitted to the future generations. Healthy males are supposed to be strong, well-built, and virile, and it is so that women like them.

Occasionally, those who lack these qualities overcome their shortcomings by using the cleverness and skill of their tailors, and so on.

A healthy female should naturally have a fine complexion, red lips, handsome figure, and so on. Those who do not possess these things, try to disguise the actual defects by using cosmetics, lipsticks, and a variety of clothing, while others use such accessories to enhance any advantages already possessed. The desire to have a home, security in life, and not to be alone are also potent factors in marriage. As we have seen, all of them are purely of the realm of the ego-life. But as long as humans are mostly just these egos, all of them are natural, and even needed for humanity. Even so, a human being is something much more than just the ego. Those who transcend this primitive form of existence, great Teachers, Saints, and Yogis, are no longer bound by the previously mentioned laws. Their functions are much more elevated. How many children had Christ or Maharshi, or any of the Saints? They were all far above and beyond the lower functions, which appear to be obligatory for average mortals.

Why should we deceive and trick ourselves? An open and impartial analysis is far better than any hypocrisy. People often speak about so-called spiritual love between men and women. Common interests, intellectual strivings, similar tastes in culture and pleasure, and so on, may be deciding factors in unions between couples. Perhaps such things are the most important links between them, and not the physical side of such a love. Well then, let us make a test. Let us say to a couple that, if they really place the greatest value on these inner links and not on sexual experiences, would they like to resign from these allegedly second class things, giving everything to what they term the spintual side of their union?

Surely, they would both refuse and if before marriage one of the partners suggested such a condition, the other would break the engagement. So what is the truth? The rest is only hypocrisy and self-deceit.

There are many cases where the husband has lost his physical attractiveness and virility and the marriage has ended in divorce or simply the abandonment of the affected person. The same may be the case with the wife.

Everywhere, it is the body that decides. Then there is the question of physical jealousy. From the point of view of healthy descendants, it is biologically important for the female partner to associate with only one man. Likewise, to a lesser degree, the same applies to the male partner. Wise Nature gave us an inner sense of exclusiveness in physical relationship. It is usually called jealousy. Again, the rule affects the bodily part of the human being. The same applies to most animals. The premarital fights of stags, felines, many birds, as well as some primitive tribes serve to eliminate the weaker males, leaving the field to the stronger, healthier one, which can produce the better progeny. From that point of view it is quite right.

We cannot serve two masters. If we speak of spiritual life, we must not try to smuggle in the lower things. It will be quite useless and will only end in self-deceit and frustration. Better to avoid lies and decently follow the average way of life until the greatest Light really can be seen. The renunciation of sensuality belongs to the advanced ranks of men, and manifests itself in the almost last earthly life of the disciple.

Burdens destined for an adult life cannot be placed on a child; they would simply crush it.

The initial stage of renunciation of sensuality can never be accomplished without fierce fighting between the lower and higher parts of human nature. The fact that such a fight has begun, may signify that the time is already ripe. It can also be a form of egoism, for when one is jealous of the attainment of his most advanced kinsmen or even of a Master, the whole thing becomes mere aping or mimicry. Now we are in a better position to realize why the Maharshi never encouraged such things and spoke out against premature transformation "from a householder to a *sanyasin* (monk)," pointing out that it could be only a change of name and not of the inner being.

Knowledge of the above is indispensable to the earnest seeker. He must firmly establish his true position and possibilities.

Otherwise frustration and sorrow are inevitable.

XLVII

The Story of a Meeting

The well-known occultist, mystic, and psychologist, Paul Sédir of Paris —who lived round the turn of this century—gives us a very interesting and inspiring story of how he met his supreme Master.

Paul Sédir was a member of numerous occult societies between 1890 and 1910, when the so-called secret science apparently flourished in Europe.

There were other representatives of the secret wisdom of the West still alive, such as Dr. Papus, the famous Hermetist, hypnotist, and magician, who made his knowledge accessible to a wide public by his numerous and extensive researches, published in his voluminous French works. The mysterious writer and master of magic Stanislas de Guaita was also, at that time, captivating people with his treatise on so-called black magic. But Sédir was not satisfied with them at all. In the midst of his various activities he was really seeking a perfect synthesis of Wisdom, and a true Master who could open for him the secret door of his own Being: that which is beyond all outer appearance, beyond doubts and fears.

His search was in vain until he reached his forties. In a suburb of Paris he occasionally met two disciples of an unknown Master. They were a Mr. Andreas and his wife, Stella. The husband was the proprietor of an antique shop, and did repair work when the opportunity arose.

Sédir soon made friends with the elderly couple and he quickly recognized the high level of attainment of both of them. Andreas performed miraculous cures easily, but secretly. He possessed the power of thought reading, and seeing distant places, but apart from all this there was his quiet and unobtrusive wisdom. Sédir could hardly put a question to him that was not answered by that mysterious man, Andreas, in an astonishingly simple way: all except the one that Andreas did not wish

to give or could not give to Sédir, the ultimate solution to his inner problems. Nevertheless, in his books Sédir recognized that the society of Andreas brought him immense spiritual benefit, being a kind of preparation needed to make possible the meeting with the Supreme Master, as he then called him.

But many years passed. He visited Andreas and his wife regularly in their small house in a street close to the cemetery of Père Lachaise. The inner questions tormented him as before. He decided to retire from his social life. He sold his large collection of books, among which were genuine rare antiques of occult science, unobtainable from any bookshop.

In his medical practice he decided not to take fees from patients unless they offered them. He attended the poor without payment, often helping them with medicines when he knew that they could not afford to buy expensive drugs. Gradually, he stopped his contributions to the occult and philosophical periodicals of France, and his former good name as a famous exponent of the secret science began to diminish.

At last his own health was imparied, and a serious lung infection became dangerous. But with all these unfavorable symptoms his spirit remained undisturbed. In the midst of his troubles, unfulfilled hopes, and uncertainty of finding the Master, something in him that was unaffected by all this silently advised him, to work and to wait.

Now follows his own account, freely translated from the French.

> It was a cold, rainy, November evening in Paris. I had just returned from my patients, eaten my supper and lain down on the couch, being tired after my day's long activities. As usual by evening, I had a slight fever and I knew that the treacherous T.B. process in one of my lungs was the cause. At that time I had given up all my former hopes and aims. There was an emptiness in me and indifference to everything. It did not matter whether I lived or died. My almost empty house, with its bare shelves and chests, looking like dark caves, and the unbroken stillness—I had no servant living with me—rather oppressed me.
>
> I was ready to retire to my bedroom, when the doorbell rang. I guessed what it would be, a patient who was too poor to afford to pay any other doctor. People already knew that I never refused my services, and did not care about money.
>
> The late visitor was a modest-looking official whose wife was dying of T.B. He hold me, with tears in his eyes, that there was no

hope for her, her hours were numbered, and it was not help he wanted; it was too late. "But she is suffering so terribly," he said, "her lungs are gone and she is suffocating. All I ask is that you relieve her last hours of agony. An injection perhaps, you will know best."

I could not fail him. So, silently I put on my overcoat, took an umbrella and we went out.

At that time there was no tram in that suburb, so we walked in heavy rain and wind. My own head was swollen with fever, and in my chest were sharp pains, the origin of which I knew only too well. My companion and I were both silent.

We were passing one of the street lamps which scarcely lighted the empty footpath, when something prompted me to raise my head and look up. Beside the pole I saw a tall, well-built man, with the figure of an athlete visible even through his expensive, well-cut clothes. His back was turned to me so I could not see his face. As soon as I came closer, he turned round and with great dignity politely raised his hat. He asked if I was a doctor going to a patient. When I confirmed this, he continued: "I beg your permission to go with you. There is just the possibility that I can be helpful."

My first thought was that there was little help that could be given as the woman was already dying, and was beyond human aid. But when I saw his face, I had to agree instantly. The man was apparently in his early forties, with regular features, the complexion as if burned by a tropical sun and eyes that looked at me with infinite quietness and force.

So we three went on our way. The door of the unhappy husband's home was not locked. In the small hall was an elderly lady with a grief-stricken face and eyes of despair. She greeted us, and said: "Too late, my son, there is no need for a doctor, but rather an undertaker. She died soon after you went in a spasm of bleeding from the throat."

Her husband wept at these words. I said I would not stay as there was nothing more I could do, other than to sign the death certificate.

Then the three of us went into the bedroom. Two wax candles were burning, one on each side of the dead woman's head. For a doctor there was no possible doubt that before us lay only a corpse. The cheeks were colorless and waxy-looking skin covered the bones of the skull-like face. Shrunken by death, the meager hands were folded on the breast, and the whole body, so long tortured, seemed to beg only one last grace, the peace of a quiet grave.

Two young children knelt beside their mother's deathbed. Tears streamed down the husband's face.

Then I heard the firm voice of the Unknown Man beside me, asking if I would like to examine the body as I would need to do so for the death certificate. Actually, there was no need for any examination as the woman had already been dead for about an hour. But I thought it was best to perform this last formality. The pulse had ceased long ago. The limbs were cold and stiff as is usual with people emaciated by a dreadful disease. A little warmth still surrounded the solar plexus. But the whole body was rather like a skeleton.

I told the Man that the woman had been dead about an hour. A strange almost invisible smile crossed his powerful features. He spoke to the grief-stricken husband, and his voice sounded grave. "Do you want your wife alive? Will you swear to me now, that you will always be good to her, if she comes back?"

The poor man was astonished and almost afraid. "It is not possible! See for yourself! Surely she is dead." The voice of the stranger went on pitilessly: "I ask you only if you want to have her back again? And will you swear that she will never again suffer from your behavior?"

The man replied that he would take an oath on the Holy Cross, only it was too late and he could not believe in the impossible.

Then the Unknown Man went close to the bed, took the head of the dead woman gently in his hands, bent down and whispered to her; but everyone in the room could hear his words clearly.

"My dear, my daughter, come back again, return, they need you. It will be favorably counted to you, this sacrifice which you make."

When we heard that whisper, there was no doubt in us but that she must rise from the dead. There was no power which could oppose the words of the Unknown. The dead woman immediately lifted her head and opened her eyes, looking around as though from another world. "I was dreaming," she whispered.

The Man ordered more lamps to be brought. The old lady and her son went out like automatons, and I felt that they did not yet believe what had happened before their eyes only seconds ago.

When they came back, holding large lamps in their hands, the woman, restored to life, sat up in bed her face, pressed close to the powerful arm of the Unknown, like a child seeking a secure place. She wept.

The Man then took both lamps in his hands and directed the

light onto the face of the woman. Before my eyes, the flesh began to reappear under the skin of her cheeks, neck, and shoulders, and the whole complexion returned to its natural color, instead of that of a corpse, which I had seen only seconds ago.

The old lady and her son dropped on their knees before the Man. The children raised their hands as before the holy image in church. But he quickly put the lamps on the table and lifted the kneeling people with a movement of irresistible force.

"Be thankful to the Almighty alone, who in His Grace has restored her to you," he said gently. "She is better already," he added with a smile which I believe illumined the room more than the lamps. "Give her fresh clothes and bring her some food!"

Turning to the husband he said: "And you my son, remember what you promised me!"

For a moment he stayed quietly among us without a word. I saw that now on the bed sat a lovely young woman having little resemblance to the one which had lain there before. The Man, radiant with joy, took leave in the old French fashion, by kissing each one in the room on the forehead. Then he took my arm and we were back in the street once more.

He told me he was leaving Paris in half an hour on the midnight train for the Italian border. "From the express I catch my ship in Genoa for the Far East, to Saigon. I cannot delay the travel. I have a reserved compartment for two, so if you wish you may accompany me on the train journey."

For the next eight hours he spoke quietly to me, revealing everything: my past, my future, explaining the reason for the happenings in my life, which before were unfathomable to me. At his words the Truth took a unique and logical form, and together with its fulfilment, my being has been changed.

His irresistible peace penetrated the darkest corners of my consciousness, and remained there forever. He showed me the Path and he unveiled things which cannot be spoken of or written. The only thing I can say is, that even if I had to suffer infinite agonies for timeless ages, the bliss of those eight hours spent with the Master would be like comparing the light of the sun with a dim candle.

The Master's behavior was that of an educated, well-bred Frenchman. Although he knew a dozen languages I was not sure to which nationality he belonged. I dared not ask any personal questions. But he was very friendly, and spoke to me as if to an old friend. I did not see in him any traces of asceticism, because he ate a normal meal

with me in the railway restaurant at Lyons and did not choose any special dishes.

He smoked, and when he offered me a cigarette, I refused politely, telling him about my lungs, and that I had to care for my health. He only laughed. "Do you really feel there is something still wrong in your chest, dear Doctor?"

Instinctively I breathed deeply, trying to find the old pain. But it was not there. I was cured? "Yes, my son," he said, "you are cured of your inner faults, so how could the physical ones resist being cured?" He read my thoughts as one reads the lines of an open book.

When I wished to ask his name, he told me before I said a word. "You will know it in a moment, but you will not be told it." And immediately, I knew it, from the soundless speech of the Master. But I will never betray this name to the world. Even later, when talking with Andreas and Stella, the Name was never uttered. "It is enough that we know it," said my friend.

He also told me that he and his wife saw the Master of Masters only twice in their lives, but they were sure he would visit them again for the last time before they left this world.

"You are entitled to hope for the first time. If you follow his advice you will see him again in this life. I saw him first thirty years ago, and he was then also in his forties, as you say he is now. No one knows his birthplace or nationality: with a Frenchman he behaves as a Frenchman, with an Italian he behaves as an Italian, and so on. He is recognized in the most secret circles of the East and West, as a great Master. I saw many Yogis and Chinese Mandarins versed in the hidden teachings, prostrating before him without hesitation. Now he has a mission in the East and it is because of that, that he has left our country. He travels throughout the whole world."

All this happened when my friends Andreas and Stella were elderly, and they have long since passed away. Winter of life has now come for me and the hour when I may see Him for the last time is not far off. I am looking forward to that hour, in His peace and certainty, which he has sown in me for ever.

Paul Sédir died in 1926.

XLVIII

Epilogue

FRUSTRATION AND ITS FRUITS

To live one's life without having justified it by striving toward an ideal that does not belong to the realm of pure fantasy means only pitifully to frustrate this life. The punishment for such frustration follows one as does an earthly shadow the human form.

All the horrors of Dante's imaginary pictures of hell are child's play in comparison to the implacable and inevitable suffering generated by frustration and the realization of it.

For the man who has become conscious of his frustration, there is no more cruel torturer than himself. And there is no escape from his own vengeance.

There are innumerable forms of human frustration, and one can as little enumerate them, as describe all types of humanity.

Therefore, only an outline can be traced. And it is: that any pursuit of that which must be lost in time and space will inevitably lead to frustration. This is the way of the fool.

Wisdom, on the other hand, is to ascribe to everything just what it is really worth. This is the path of the wise. The fool does not possess the cardinal virtue of clear discrimination. He seeks after pleasure instead of bliss, ignorant of the fact that suffering is the inevitable complement of pleasure, that they are as inseparable as the two sides of a coin.

There can be no doubt that many are unable to savor the fragrance of Wisdom, since their senses make them unresponsive to it. Where one sees an ocean of immaterial beauty and bliss, others find nothing but incomprehensible words. A fool seeing a Sage thinks him to be a fakir or false saint, or an average man. And yet the exhibitions of a fakir or

false master may flatter his ego-sense and make him accept the impostor as a Sage.

DO WE REALLY LIVE?

Everyone says that he is living. But how many have any definite idea of the meaning of the word life, which they use so freely?

All activities that men usually call life are set at nought by its still less comprehensible antithesis, death.

If this is so, then death is the only reality, the only true power, since it annihilates all that men call life.

Few men in history have been strong enough to defy the power of death and mock at it. Those who have done so are recognized as outstanding sons of humanity. Therefore it would be only logical to accept that they KNEW something more than average men.

"Where shall we bury you?" asked the grief-stricken disciples of Socrates when their master took the poisoned cup in his hands. "That is no concern of mine" replied the philosopher. "But I doubt that you will be able to catch ME anyway."

"Where have I to go?" asked the Maharshi, shortly before leaving his body. "I will remain here even more alive than ever."

Men like to have a ready prescription for the state of death. How can they fail to realize that without uniformity in life there cannot be any general rule for death?

Deaths are as different as the corresponding human lives. Therefore, if someone tries to impose his own conceptions of the matter on us, he is either ignorant or a rogue.

For the overcoming of death one condition is necessary. Life in the body must extend itself far beyond the limitations of the personal life which is enclosed in the threefold conglomeration of material bodies. Only he who has been able to expand his consciousness into unlimited space, eternally free and unaffected by anything, has reached immortality in full.

The above requires the abandonment of the idea that one is just a human being, having legs, arms, a head, and other appendages.

Only that in us which is free from all attachments can perform the flight into eternity.

"If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell."

SUFFERING

Suffering is the direct consequence of our attachment to perishable things. With pain and toil we acquire these things, and with suffering we are compelled to lose them. The only happy man, according to a well-known philosophical legend, is he who has not even a shirt. This is a simile, of course, for there are few countries in which it could be taken literally.

But the true weapon against suffering is *inner* asceticism and non-attachment to anything perishable.

All religions know of this truth, but unfortunately, this cannot be said of all their followers. In Christian faiths there is a beautiful response to suffering caused by the loss of anything. It is: "God gave me this, God took it back again. Blessed be His Name for ever."

Physical suffering is by no means an insupportable form of human affliction. He suffers most who believes that he is the suffering body. Quite a different picture arises when this primitive belief is transcended. Apart from this, the wise man knows that everyone gets his own cross and it is bearable for him. The fool will complain indefinitely, forgetting to count his own iniquities. He only adds to his punishment.

For the wise one, suffering leads inevitably to still greater enlightenment and development of inner beauty. Sometimes this process becomes dazzling for those who are able to see it.

Men often quarrel and complain about the gravity of their afflictions, cruelty of their enemies, and so on. To such Thomas à Kempis said: "Christ had enemies and detractors, and wouldst thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors?"

MYSTERIES

There is no such thing as mystery. But there is that which creates the illusion of mystery. No one wishes to hide anything from us, but we are

doing this very effectively by merging ourselves into ignorance and not trying to raise our heads above the surface of that ignorance. This cannot be achieved without effort, and sometimes great effort.

Knowledge in others is of little use to a man; he must acquire wisdom for himself. Nobody can digest food for another. He who realizes this will find the knowledge that dispels all mysteries, which then simply cease to exist for him.

GOD

God is as real as you are. He is a living reality for you if you yourself are the same.

It is useless to try to know God before you know yourself. There is *nothing* apart from God and only when you discover that there is *nothing* apart from the "real you" will you get a chance to know Him.

Do not be deluded! No being can "know" Him as something *apart* from itself, for we can only merge in God Who is All. But then we are not what we call a "human being" (or even any other) with all its limitations.

"To see God is *to be* God" (from the Maharshi's sayings). Therein lies the answer to the problem often posed by those who believe in the all-pervading nature of God: that Man being one of the manifestations of the Supreme can never reflect Him in the imperfect and limited human form. But by going out from his temporary shells, man can raise himself to the heights of consciousness which we call—God.

As Mr. or Mrs. X you are far from the Supreme; but by finding within yourself that which is eternal and independent, you merge into the Supreme.

Nothing is closer to man than God and still man cannot see Him. It is because of two things. Firstly, man does not seriously seek for God and secondly, because he still believes that "God is there and I am here."

Whoever thinks that this earth is his home is far from God.

But whoever is able to recognize as his home the Infinite Space that is beyond all forms and time will find God in himself.

All injunctions, propaganda, and preaching used to incite men in the

search for God are useless. The unripe will never listen and those mature enough need no outer bidding.

ATTAINMENT

True attainment coming as a result of a successful search for Truth is far beyond all of mind's logic. Such a man does not bother to find out WHY he has been seeking, just as a physically healthy person does not ask himself why he is healthy. He simply IS and no questions are needed any more.

The attainment or Realization of the highest in man is never dependent upon a man's religion, Yoga, beliefs, performance of ritual, or particular ways of life, and so on.

Those who have reached the aim know that rather the abandonment of all outer forms leads to the goal.

But there is one factor that is a deciding one if the search is to be successful. It is the living example encountered in one's life. For then the greatest obstacle disappears, man's doubts.

If a man feels that he still needs some particular forms of worship, religion, Yoga, exercises, and so on, it is the best proof that he is not yet ripe for the capture of Heaven. He is still seeking the way with the use of crutches. Realization is not for such aspirants, at least not in the current lifetime.

Attainment enlightens everything. It makes all the efforts mentioned in the previous paragraph available to a man; but then he is already far above and beyond them. He will breathe rhythmically when in meditation, he will know the best postures for his body, and the best themes for contemplation will come to him of themselves. But again, he will be beyond all of them.

Without attainment nothing can really be done. Man is only lost in the limitless forest of human knowledge and drowned in the bottomless ocean of *Maya*.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." But after almost 2,000 years since this key to attainment was given to ignorant humanity, man is still unable to follow even such a simple commandment.

WISDOM

Wisdom is never a product of man's thinking. To try to translate Wisdom into the language of the mind to make it a little more understandable is the work of the mind, just as typing is the work of a thinking typist. When there is nothing to type, even the best of typists cannot use their ability.

Men usually mistake knowledge derived from thinking for Wisdom.

There is no adequate expression that fully explains the term WISDOM, for the effort of translating it into the language of the mind inevitably brings confusion.

However, a few attempts can be made and one is: that knowledge which extends beyond relativity and is independent of everything may reflect something of the illimitable Light of Wisdom.

Everyone can test this personally. If it is felt that one can see something apart from and beyond all relativity—beyond words and earthly terms—then there may be the dawn of Wisdom in the individual consciousness.

If not, then it is best to leave alone what is impossible and to follow the paths of approach until the aim becomes visible.

Therefore, Wisdom may be compared to the absolute silencing of all that is relative in man. Practically, this means the abandonment of the compulsory thinking process.

Such Wisdom will be everywhere with a man, in this life and beyond the grave. It is not hard to recognize that such an attainment will be far from easy, for surely the price will be high.

But those who are willing to pay the price consider it as insignificant in comparison to the benefits which they receive.

There is another definition of Wisdom: seeing everything in its own light, just as it is and not otherwise.

For a Sage, everything is equal and nothing affects him because he possesses the true Wisdom. When looking at old men and women, he also sees their youth. He knows that the film of life can be reversed and then what strange scenes appear on the screen. Likewise, when looking at youthful beauties, a Sage sees them many years later when old age and infirmity have rendered their present short-lived appearance unreal and unattractive.

GUIDES

There are forces that lead men who have chosen their paths. These forces might have a personal or impersonal manifestation. In the majority of cases they assume human form. Men then call them Masters or Great Teachers.

They are as real as is the deepest and undisturbed consciousness in a spiritually advanced man.

It is difficult to speak about the "personalities" of the Guides. Some of them have a mission to perform openly, while others conduct their activities far beyond the sight and understanding of average persons.

One thing is certain: all of them are essentially ONE.

Whoever has known one of the Great Masters will always recognize the others and will reject the wolves in sheep's clothing.

There is no stain in a Master. He is far above all human imperfections. If one finds something wrong in his supposed Master, he must abandon him at once.

For then there are only two possibilities: either the Master is false, or the prospective disciple is still unripe and therefore spiritually blind.

In either case, in order to avoid inner catastrophe, a man should seek other ways.

> Wait for the darkness before the Dawn of the Immeasurable Light, when the face of the Master will smile upon thee, when the voice of the Master will say to thee, in tones of sweetness deeper than ever came from human lips: "O my child in the Law, thou hast practiced the perfect way; thou hast believed and understood the highest truth; therefore I come now to meet and to welcome thee!" (Paraphrase from *Kokoro*, a Japanese legend told by Lafcadio Hearn.)

CRITICISM

Next time you see a monk or nun passing in their cumbersome clothes, do not think that they are necessarily just pitiful, narrow-minded, or fanatical individuals. For often they have already taken the first and most difficult steps on the long path of human struggle to Eternity.

They have renounced many things and sacrificed others that perhaps still hold you in an invisible but very real prison, your desires and restless mind.

Therefore why laugh at their black or yellow robes and shaven heads?

INTELLIGENCE

The highest form of intelligence comes to a man as a direct result of his inner spiritual enlightenment, which makes him a citizen of the land called Eternity, and no longer a slave of some short-lived manifestation on this or another lump of rough matter, which we term planets.

This citizenship opens doors and gives us glimpses of things about which other beings are not even able to dream.

In the revelations of the few true spiritual Teachers, who came to this earth in different periods recorded in human history, the enlightened person will always find the speech of Eternity deeply hidden under the layers of the human form of expression.

BEGINNING

No journey has ever been performed without the first step being made in the desired direction. And yet men like trying to judge about the greatest of all journeys, to the eternal Life-Consciousness, without even making one step toward it.

This step is not some invented and accepted theory designed merely for discussion and reading. It is an inner movement, which steadily changes a man beyond all recognition when compared to his former state.

Why deceive yourself and others? If you cannot find the root of Eternity in yourself today (not necessarily in the morning or at some other given time), then how can you have any hope of conscious life after death?

LOVE

Actually men do not really love themselves, for, apart from their bodily shells, they do not care about their own lives.

So how could they realize and practice the Teacher's commandment: "Love thy neighbor as thyself"?

The perfect Love is also the perfect Wisdom. They are inseparable.

Only those persons who themselves lack any means of higher cognition and discrimination could fail to recognize and admire those few Great Beings who have lived among humanity in the last two or three thousand years.

SIGHT

Just as a blind person cannot admire the beauties of a sunny spring day, so spiritually unripe individuals cannot see anything, other than distant and strangely sounding words, in revelations and true messages.

There are as many worlds as there are eyes to see them, for nobody sees anything exactly the same as does another.

EQUALITY

There are not and never have been two identical separate living beings existing in the various manifested worlds.

The dream of an all-embracing equality is one of the most stupid ideas ever conceived by the human mind.

Wise persons know that the diversity of outer forms is only a proof of the relative diversity of the rays of Life, which for some time cause our bodies to appear as if alive.

The size, coloring and other qualities of these rays of Life may vary, but they are all still the same unique Life.

"Why are things like this and not like that?" feverishly thinks the foolish man; but for the wise, such questions do not even arise, for they know that it simply could not be otherwise. There is no inner strife in the Sage.

SAINTHOOD

A Saint does not actually know that he is a saint. This means that he never thinks of himself in comparison with others. He has long since

left far behind all such meditations about his own qualities: otherwise he would not be a Saint. The sanctity is an INNER state and not a brightly painted façade, as one Saint remarked.

In the world of illusion and imperfection, men try to ridicule everything that is higher than themselves, believing that by the fact of humiliating virtue they may raise their own deplorable status.

Therefore the Sage and the Saint usually conceal their personal state and the heights that they have attained in this life from the crowds.

And they are right: for the spiritually blind man, nothing is of an undoubted value, and the light of the enlightened ones is invisible to him. The most striking and magnificent miracles of Christ did not convince many of His contemporaries except for the few Apostles and other righteous people who were ripe enough to see the greatness in their own epoch, created by the Messiah.

There is no standard that could show to ALL the saintliness in a man. Apart from the Great Teachers, who often suffered outer troubles from their surroundings, many Saints endured afflictions and apparently had to experience much pain, or were simply martyrs for their faith.

We are able to see only that which is already waiting to germinate within us. Therefore, it is not sufficient to have ears to hear and eyes to see. There is something much more subtle in spiritual matters, which alone opens the inner sight in a man. Then he becomes aware of all Saints and Sages, and attempts to emulate them. He cannot do otherwise, for then he hears and sees.

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